

A Book of Stories



Edited by

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PREFACE



The assembling of an anthology of short stories for college students involves two separate problems—the selection of the stories and their arrangement. On the threshold of their task the editors were momentarily tempted to think that the two could be treated as one—that the choice of a story might be made on the basis of its fitness for a certain place in a pattern. But they quickly put aside this airy hope, and from the outset they were simply concerned to select twenty seven short stories and a short novel according to one standard: interestingness in the classroom. The teacher wants a story to present basic problems in life and literature and to raise some particular question in analytical method or the craft of fiction. With respect to the student a story should have an immediate appeal: it should not be so formidable as to perplex him and leave him in a state of despair, nor should it be so spontaneously understandable as to make discussion and analysis unnecessary.

There are of course other possible criteria: the most enticing of which is personal preference. This would result in a special kind of anthology which, though perfectly legitimate and worth while, would delude the student seeking an introduction to fiction. Reading thirty stories in the manner of Chekhov does little to increase one's understanding of Tolstoy. Among the other possible criteria are the familiarity or unfamiliarity of the story, the nationality of the author, the historical importance of the author, and the question as to whether the given story is a characteristic example of his work. Although there is no denying the importance of these considerations, the editors felt that they should not be decisive in a volume designed for introductory courses in literature. Interest in the classroom, then, was the basis of selection, but this is not to say

that all the stories are superlative masterpieces. Perfection is not so common as all that, and, besides, one of the functions of a course in literature is to undeceive those students who hold the too simple notion that one literary work is wholly good and another is entirely bad.

But intensity of the student's immediate response is not enough. What really matters in the end is the abiding effect of a thoughtful reading and a growth in critical discernment on the part of the student. And this raises the problem of the arrangement of the chosen stories. Some design is wanted in order to ensure, or at least to provide for, the student's expanding awareness of general problems in literary study and of the particular problems of prose fiction. At the same time a scheme must not be so rigid as to impose a set order upon the teacher or to mislead students into supposing that to classify a story or to analyze one aspect of it is to understand and appreciate it. The best solution to the problem is an organization that is unobtrusive and may indeed be ignored altogether but one that is nevertheless real and serviceable. The stories in this volume are arranged in several clusters, and within each group there are sufficient parallels and contrasts to generate questions and to lead to discriminations. Thus the first group, consisting of three pairs of somewhat similar stories, may be approached from the aspect of theme and total meaning. The next cluster, also consisting of six stories, is designed to provide for the study of plot. Then follows a group of five stories which offer an opportunity for studying the major kinds of point of view. With the next two stories the approach to fiction is broadened by the inclusion of the analogue for *The Secret Sharer* and two versions of *First Confession*. Here the student may gain an insight into the ways of the creative imagination and the quest for technical excellence. The last group includes various kinds of symbolical stories and also provides for a return to theme and total meaning.

At the end of each story is the date of first publication, and at the end of the volume are brief biographies of the authors.

R A G

B H

Urbana, Illinois
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A BOOK OF STORIES



ANDRÉ CHAMSON



My Enemy *

As I came down to the river I saw there was a boy swimming about in the pool. He was naked, save for the handkerchief tied round his waist, as he swam with slow breast strokes, spluttering among the wavelets that receded from his path. Above his hidden face the close cropped hair dripped with tiny drops. He was swimming towards me, with his eyes fixed on the shelving bottom. As he reached the edge he raised himself erect against the perpendicular bank and looked up. It was Maubert. He saw me in the very instant that I realized who it was, and taking a deeper breath, put up his hands to get a hold on the rock.

While he was trying to hoist himself upon the bank I was hurriedly gathering stones. In a second or two I had four in my left hand, and tight in my right, still another, oval, bulging, and heavy like some precious metal. With my arm flung back I shouted at the boy who was trying to drag himself up the rocky walls polished to glassy smoothness by the spring time spates.

Stop where you are!

With one swift look he calculated his chances. Naked half in the water, precariously balanced, he was in no position to defend himself. Wherever he looked there seemed no way out. I swung my arm above his head. He knew well my aim would be sure. And thereupon he let himself drop into deep water again, and gazed at me while floating on his back.

It was Maubert, my enemy. I trembled with rage and ecstatic joy as I looked at him. My blood, beating violently in my veins, thudded through the hand clenched round my missile, as I thought, Got him! in much the same way as one becomes aware

* Translated from the French by John Rodker

how difficult some action is only when it has successfully been accomplished

Oh, he looked pretty crestfallen with twelve feet of water under him and hemmed in by the slippery walls. His eyes, full of tears, fixed themselves intently on me. I could not conjure up the slightest pity for him. Our childish hatred was of too long standing. A dozen times we had fought each other already, without either of us getting the upper hand. There came to my mind that night when he had pounced on me with a couple of his chums. They were pushing a wheelbarrow along. The street had been dark and it was near the bridge. Totally unsuspecting, all I had heard was my name Tchamsoun, pronounced in the local way, and the thud of the wheelbarrow's two legs suddenly hitting the ground. And, immediately, I had been blinded with blows. Nevertheless, by wildly kicking out, striking round me and biting whatever met my teeth, I made them give way long enough to enable me to retreat still facing them, like an angry cat pursued by dogs. But it was not the others that mattered, it was Maubert on whom all my hatred fell. When our two schools fought together on Saturdays, for instance, under the chestnut trees of the fair ground, it was always Maubert I aimed at. We would load stones with insults and spit on them at the very moment they were hurled, so as to bewitch them and make them truly strike their goal. And Maubert, too, always aimed at me whenever we had these clashes. Now I had him in my power, one against one, with every advantage on my side. It was as thrilling as ambushing a whole troop of enemies in a ravine.

I sat myself down on the bank. He was just opposite me, but if he so much as let the current begin to carry him away threateningly I raised my arm. Then paddling a little with his hands, utterly docile and unable to take his eyes off my stone, he would return to the old place.

With all the sternness I could summon up, I gazed at him, as though my glances, too, could have struck. With every moment my rage increased. He was the worst enemy I had. We did not go to the same school. Our parents did not want us to know each other. Mine said, They're people you couldn't trust an inch and that blind rancour of theirs was unquestioningly accepted by

me His grandfather had denounced the Republicans in the time of the Second Empire, and my own grandfather had had to go before the mixed Commissions At the age of six we were already hating each other Everything his family owned seemed horrible to me They had a tiny vineyard and a little house outside the town, on the road to Elze, and all around seemed like a spot accursed in the midst of our own valley, a spot abhorred by the sun, sodden with unhealthy damp and devoured by insects and decay Always I avoided the street they lived in in the centre of our town, and the manner in which his parents gained their living seemed both repulsive and suspicious in my eyes They were folk of a different race Their only thought was how to do us harm, and we felt our hatred justified because we knew how ready we were to forgive and forget the ancient wrongs And yet the hatred between our families sprang into being as each new child was born, and from the age of eight we were always fighting each other, backed up by our gangs of good for nothings who shared the same hates

I d got him He was a good swimmer, but he was already beginning to show signs of fatigue At moments his whole head would go under and come up again, spluttering out the water he had swallowed I looked at him with fury I had never seen him so close In fact, I had hardly known what he looked like He was fourteen, like me You could not have called him good-looking with his cropped hair clotted to right and left like wheat ears after a storm Whenever he spat the motion made by his lips sent a spasm of disgust through all my body They were too thick, too pulpy altogether As I looked at them I thought, They look like the lips of a gul Round his waist the handkerchief floated like some aquatic plant, while the crystal clear water foreshortened his small, thin, dark skinned shapely body

I watched him carefully, my missile ready Suppose, instead he had caught me in the pool I d have had that stone hurled at me long ago I could read his thoughts in his shifty eyes If only he could! But just let him try and drift away on the current If I do aim I ll go for his head So much the worse for him And if I kill him? Oh, stones don t kill Hell manage to get out of the water all right with his head broken and his face all bloody They gave

me a pretty good grueling, they did, that night when they had the wheelbarrow, and I was one against three

Stop where you are, I tell you You just dare to let the current carry you away

I had jumped up with my arm flung back He came nearer again swimming on his back He seemed at the last gasp frozen His teeth were chattering like a toy I reseated myself on the rocks, and began looking at his face once more The shifty swine If one gave in to them they wouldn't take long But I'm on top this time We'll see if he'll dare flinch

The sun sank, the pool fell more and more in shadow, the water turned to ink Maubert still spat out mouthfuls of water from time to time But now I was looking at him without disgust, thinking,

Funny, all the same, I should have caught him here! He comes swimming here in the mountain like me? And he knows about my pool No! He must have passed by accident and wanted a swim He hadn't even got his bathing drawers with him What cheek that he should have come up here! And pick on my own pool! Ah, but if he'd been the one to catch me here

By now the cold must have penetrated him through and through In late June the water is still very cold One can catch one's death of cold by staying too long in our local rivers He kept on watching me, and seemed to be waiting for something to happen Oh, you're waiting, are you? Well! I'll attend to you I'll give you a good bang on the head with this stone, or on the arm, or even close to your body and send you under

I was standing up, turning the stone about in my fingers, to get a solid grip I knew how it had to be hurled to keep it straight on the mark It was a splendid stone, beautifully polished in the water, a shepherd's stone with which I could have brought down a bird thirty feet away A terrific swing, a sudden release from the arrested arm, and away it would fly as though one single pencil of whistling stone stretched to his forehead from my arm People like that must be crushed like snakes, before they have time even to strike He hasn't even the courage to resist He's stupefied by fear If it was me, I should have dived and swum under water to the other side of the pool I too would have gathered my stones on the other bank But he doesn't think of anything All he does

is look at me with that girlish face Now I see who he reminds me of It's his sister That big seventeen-year-old He's got the same sort of lips

Maubert was motionless now, waiting for me to strike, keeping himself afloat with slight movements of the forearms He had the appearance of being knocked senseless already, struck in the temple by my stone, as he lay there on his back For a moment I looked at him thus, picturing him dead, and suddenly I let the stones fall out of my left hand Then, from the other, I hurled the stone high over his head, on to the other bank of the mountain torrent, and said, Get out of the water Come here

I had hardly finished speaking before he was clinging to the bank, shuddering with cold and making a brrr sound with his lips He dragged himself up the rocky wall, covered his parts with his hands, and ran to the foot of a bush where he had left his clothes I remained looking at the pool while he dressed After some moments I looked back over my shoulder, and saw him coming towards me slowly, fastening his belt He seemed to be thinking I began looking at the water again, with ~~the~~ thought in my mind, Now he's going to throw a stone at my head He's where the stones are, he has lots more round him than I have

When I decided to look round I saw he was now very close He had turned up his collar, and his cheeks were beginning to glow again as though whipped by the mountain wind Whereupon I said, You're not cold?

I've my flannel shirt, luckily

A fresh wave of that disgust, which only Maubert could awake, surged through me The thought of that flannel shirt made me want to vomit All that family always wore flannel

He had sat down near me I stretched out on the rock, and turned towards him

What made you come here? Who gave you permission to come to this pool?

Who gave me permission? I come here often It's my special pool

Yours?

I drew in I thought, His special pool? We'll soon see! Then suddenly I said

Your special pool? I've been coming here for a year now I found it one day as I was coming down from La Tessonne It was in May

I saw a sudden recrudescence of his hate for me flash from his eyes His teeth clenched as he looked at me But we were equally matched What kept me from leaping at his throat kept him also We were not afraid of each other, it was a mutual respect He continued

I discovered it by myself too, last year I come here often I like it better than the Chaussee or the Pradet You're alone, and when you're in you can always see the bottom through the water

'There's nothing you can dive off Otherwise it would be the best pool around here I've often tried to do it from the other side but that spur of rocks in the way You'd split your head open if you hit it

Maubert smiled He was looking at the hidden rock that he must himself have been well acquainted with He went on

No, there's not room That doesn't matter though it's a good pool The water's good You can feel the air it's caught up in the waterfalls

So the difference between one pool and another mattered to Maubert! He could tell when the water was light or heavy He loved them then? I could discuss all the secrets of our rivers with him?

By the time it gets to Pradet the water's lost all its air It's as heavy as clay

He nodded affirmation, and looked suspiciously at me I had discovered his secrets too We fell silent as we stared at the pool You could see the clouds passing over it, high above our heads and trooping towards the summit to press onwards to the pass Suddenly Maubert asked

'Why didn't you throw it?'

You were by yourself

You think I'm afraid of you?

What about me then? Why, I'll take on three of you, and with a barrow thrown in

He flushed slightly I had not budged, though I was ready to leap up Even stretched out I could leap to my feet with one

bound I was thinking, If he moves, I'll hurl myself head foremost at his face. He did not move however.

Why do you hate me? he said at last.

'It's you. My indignation would not let me proceed. But immediately I resumed. It's you, whose worst. Who ever did anything?'

As if expressing some obvious truth, he answered simply.

Your lot.

Our lot?

You're not the same as we are.

Again disgust overcame me. I hated Maubert, his thick lips, cropped hair and flannel shirt. Everything that came in contact with him seemed to me utterly vile. I thought of the fruit he must eat. An apple bitten by his teeth, chewed in his mouth, and finally swallowed! And now he was afraid. I could see that perfectly well. He raised himself a little on his elbows. He knew I was the stronger.

I didn't shoot to teach you a lesson. If I wanted to I could smash you altogether, see! But I prefer just to talk. That way you'll realize who you have to deal with. We're not the same as you are. Fortunately! Our sort are not shifty brutes like you, or liars either. In our school we learn more than you do. I can ask you questions that prove it. Take French history, for example. Tell me who ruled these parts after the Romans and before the Franks? Oh, yes, rack your brains all right, but that won't help you much.

Maubert did not know. He felt like crying, but suddenly, as though struck by an inspiration, he cried.

Well, how many times does 25 go into 375? In your head, in your head, don't try to work it out on your fingers! You just don't know, that's all.

For the life of me I could not find the answer. The figures danced in front of my eyes. Mental arithmetic was not my strong point, and I answered.

The Visigoths. Haven't you ever heard of the Visigoths?

Fifteen. I say fifteen and I'll prove it in my head. Ten times twenty five.

We had succeeded in humiliating each other, but instead of

increasing, our hatred had only been weakened by it I lifted my face to the sky, and noting the direction from which the breeze came, said

Wind from the sea

Means to-morrow wet will be

When Cape Coste puts a cap on

The shepherd must put his wrap on

Maubert laughed with glee at being able to finish my phrases, at knowing how to complete the local saws

When you came across this pool, you must have been coming back from La Tessonne?

I had been looking for tulips'

Under the big rocks?

'That's not the only place, you know! Do you know another place? Well La Tessonne It isn't very high One can get there in an afternoon I like hereabouts best though

He winked one eye, and with a finger began to draw the road that led to Prat-Coustal I followed its every curve, watching for the least mistake, but he made none Past the village, the path took him straight through the pasture patches, followed the line of firs, and struck the road to the pass And there you are! he said

Do you go often?

He nodded yes When he did that I felt real liking for him For the first time he seemed a decent, straightforward chap Of course, he was still far from being a chum like Jean or Maurice Still, I felt I could have gone off on a trip with him, and if need were, drunk from the same can, shared the same loaf and jam-pot, slept under the same blanket He added

I know you go up there a lot My sister's always saying, What can that skinny fellow know about mountains?

The blood rushed suddenly to my face I had stopped wanting to leap at Maubert's throat, but how I should have liked to hurl myself on that big sister that looked so much like him

'She must know a fat lot about it! Has she ever been up it even?

Why, yes, she's the one I always go with Just listen, I'll prove it Once, when we were up La Luzette, we saw you climbing the Cap de Coste You were with Jean and Maurice My sister said, Let's hide in the wood,' you know, where the dead firs are, and

there we watched you go past My sister said, They make good walkers, those little skinny chaps Just hark at them singing She meant you of course Why, you d think the whole mountain be longs to that little wai bler there!

I had lost all notion of whether we were enemies or not It was as though we had roamed the mountain side together, and were now reminiscing about it

Yes, you see, we were going up to the Aigoual Was it morning? Had you just been up ? You can tell your sister that I ll give her an hour s start any time she wants to climb up by Cap de Coste We ll jolly soon see who the mountain belongs to Take it from me, never to a girl

Maubert agreed He felt with me that none of the girls in the valley—not even his sister—could compete with us A gust of masculine solidarity welded us as one against the girls

I d like to join your lot just once You d see if I couldn t keep up But Father wouldn t let me

Why? Won t he let you talk to us?

Almost imperceptibly Maubert nodded He looked as though the prohibition made him feel ashamed And to justify himself, he added

He says that nothing good will ever come of you

Then, in a whisper, Because you haven t got any religion

And what s wrong with your own father, that nothing good ever comes of him, eh? Not the priests, I imagine?

We belong to these parts said Maubert We re not so well off But there s no need to insult my father

Well why does he ? We don t belong to these parts, I know, so what? Are we so well off? And how do you know we haven t any religion?

It isn t the true one

A lot you know whether it s true or not You say Protestants have got black throats and ears stuck to their heads Well, look just take a look Ah My throat s black, isn t it And what about your own ears, jolly fine aren t they? Well what about your own ears, eh?

Again we were in the grip of the old hatreds But talking to gether thus it was impossible to keep them up It was the mystery

in Maubert that had made an enemy of him. A sort of secret in himself made an antagonist of him. Near neighbours though we were, in the same remote countryside, we loathed each other because we did not know each other.

I said to Maubert

Your brother's school turns everyone into dunderheads'

The town school turns them into scamps and ragamuffins

We'll soon see. What do you want to do when you're a man? Why, you don't even know! As for me, I mean to be somebody. You'll come asking favours when I'm a man. We'll see who are the scamps and ragamuffins then.

Maubert had risen. I did not budge. I was sure he had no idea of attacking me. He seemed not to have heard the last words I said, or at any rate, did not wish to appear as though he considered them insulting. Instead of staring me out, he gazed at the huge dint of the valley and the way in which the torrent had cut its levels out of the mountain. Meditatively, he took the measure of the rocky bluffs, the long granite slabs that rose obliquely over our heads.

There would be time to get to the top, he said at last. 'What do you say about our going up together? I don't mean going round, but up over the rocks. I shouldn't think anyone had ever got that way up. Does it frighten you? You wouldn't dare climb that wall.'

But I was already on my feet. I threw back my head the better to take in the long rampart to which here and there clung tiny patches of grass.

You're the one who'd never follow up there. It's steeper than it looks. Enough to make a goat turn giddy. You've got to climb over that patch of grass, get by that rock face there and then that gully, and turn left and follow that ledge.'

At last we had found a way to fight each other. I was already scrambling over the stones and gravel fallen from the mountain side, followed by Maubert tucking his trousers up and tightening his belt. I was thinking, He'll soon be asking me for help. Not much chance of him managing to get through. I've tried a dozen times with Jean. But we've always given in when we've come to the last face. This time I swear I will get through. And he'll have to stay there on the ledge, fifty feet below. It took us more

than the first time to get up But now I know how it's done There's a hand-hold just at the turn, that place where the hold is just for one foot Jean was the one who found it out There he was, hanging in space for five good minutes, not daring to go forward or back

Now we had crossed the patch of pasture Our rope-soled sandals clung to the rock The first granite outcrop was easy enough I went first, not bothering much about Maubert All my attention was fixed on the loose stones It seemed hardly playing the game, to make things difficult for him with showers of loose stones I had to get him up to the ledge That was where the test would begin

The narrow gully stretched some yards or so I dragged myself out, one elbow first, got my other arm free, and slid upon my belly to a tiny patch of green The pasture climbed obliquely up to the narrow ledge, which here overhung the mountain torrent some fifty feet or so Flat on the grass, I watched Maubert emerge He was a stranger among these rocks, that was clear enough He was looking round, groping to find somewhere to place his arms The slope frightened him He had not expected it to be so steep He cast a glance down, his hands trembled a little he looked at me, and then with a supple movement, slid himself to my side There was sweat between his nose and thick lips But the expression on his face was deadly earnest

Are you done? he asked 'I'm going up to the top of the pasture

He began crawling up it on all fours, whereupon I rose, balancing with difficulty on the wet grass

Let me pass! The top of the pasture doesn't count The thing is to get past that ledge

Have you gone crazy?

We were both in front of the cleft that led to it The granite face bulged out to meet us at the head of the pasture A rocky floor, narrow and slippery, continued the pasture as far as the turn Beyond, there was nothing but the empty void to be seen I knew that the ledge continued on the other side, that the hand hold was about shoulder high, and that it could be done if one clung to the rock with one's arm at a right angle Maubert said to me

Impossible to get any further We've got here together
Well, see what your sister can do for you!

I was already on the ledge. Hugging the rock, I went forward to where the rock face bulged outwards. I tried not to think of the yawning gulf behind me. My knees trembled a little. I gulped great breaths of air to keep my limbs under control. I stretched my hand into space. 'About shoulder high. A little further though. Not quite yet. I've got to get more reach by putting my feet together. Is my arm still too high? I lower my hand. Ah, there's the hold. My fingers clutch fiercely on the rock. Like gripping an exercise ring, almost. I turn my head slightly and see Maubert six feet off. He has stood up. The yawning hole no longer frightens him. He is staring at me, keeping back the cry that rises to his lips. Just wait. . . till I've got round to the other side. Now I must put my left leg forward into space. For a moment or two I try for the hold. The ledge is higher on that side. I had forgotten that. Well, I must give one strong pull. My hand grips, my foothold is secure, I let go on Maubert's side, and with a single effort pull myself round to the other face.

Luckily the ledge is wider here. I go on breathing with all my strength to stop the trembling of my knees, and at the top of my voice, still under control, I shout

Were waiting, you rock climber you!

I can see nothing past the pure line of the granite. Maubert will never come. I begin to sing at the top of my voice, and when I stop, the sound of the water suddenly rises from the maze of waterfalls.

Suddenly I saw a hand wavering in the air. My enemy had crept to the edge of the ledge and was groping for a hand-hold. I went nearer, and gazed in silence at that hand. It was no longer Maubert, but a small, sinewy yet powerful hand that somehow conveyed an impression of courage. It felt out the rock face, clung to the slightest protuberances, and made me feel that, on the other side of the ledge, a taut hand was trying to test the measure of its endurance. But the hand slid away and again sought to find something to cling to in the void. The real hold was just at its side but, unawares, it brushed by without sensing it. Vainly it

struck against the rock, the veins swelled up, and, suddenly, a slight trembling began to animate it

Maubert You'll never do it Stay on the other side!

But still the hand went on seeking. It seemed overcome with giddiness and swaying like a person about to fall. I took it in my own and led it to the hold. It felt the dint, and clamped itself upon it like some tool. Almost at the same instant I saw Maubert's left leg set itself upon the ledge, and the lad come suddenly round my side.

Here I am! he said

There's harder still to come!

We were side by side on the ledge, our backs to the rock. Below, the ravine wound easily between the perpendicular walls. Necklaces of white bubbles, woven in the eddies of the falls, drifted slowly away and burst against the banks. Further, the torrent plunged towards the valley, disclosing the rocks and woods that framed our countryside, in apple orchards, farms and villages.

You've been here before, said Maubert. That doesn't count. I've got my own places too.

Well, even if I have been as far as here before, I know as much as you do now. I've never been able to get any further. See, up there, is where we have to get. Bar of wood, bar of iron. I swear I've never been here before.

In the midst of the granite wall was an almost vertical fissure stretching some thirty feet, the sides lined with greenish mosses swollen with oozing water. While half way up a bush protruded, rooted in some deeper crevice.

If you've never been able to get through, you won't get through to-day. Let's go down again.

But I had already started along the chimney. The first half was easy. Then, with my back wedged well against the wall, I looked up at the jutting bush. This was the place where we had finally given up the idea of going further. Even when I stretched full length I could not manage to touch the knotty trunk. I must have been at least three feet short, and there was nothing at all to help me cover the gap. From the trunk I could have crawled up over the edge of the gully. But to get there, I had to venture to work myself a little

higher, like a chimney sweep I lacked the courage to look at Maubert. He would have made me realize the void there was beneath my feet. But it was of him I was thinking. The last time, with Jean, we had given up here, beaten by the rock, yet nevertheless proud of ourselves. Now, if I gave up I should be humiliating myself in front of Maubert.

My feet had left the last morsel of jutting rock. With my knees against one wall and my back against the other, I jerked myself up. Then I relaxed. Relaxing, I felt myself growing less and less solid. I dared not move my legs any more. One of my arms, raised over my head, groped in the void, and suddenly touched the trunk with the tips of its fingers. A moment after I managed to get both my hands well round. Dragging myself up on to it, I found new holds, and cleared the next few yards with ease. Then I was clear of the wall.

My hands were bleeding a bit. Two finger nails were broken. How angry Jean would be that evening, to hear I had conquered the wall. He would want us to do it again so that he could do it too. He could go to the devil if he chose, I should never do it again.

Meanwhile Maubert was climbing also. His eyes had followed each of my gestures. He repeated them with the whole of his taut body. I felt he would rather have rolled down into the torrent than retrace his steps. Flat on my belly, looking down at him, I watched him coming up, terrified he might roll into the void. My own muscles, identical with those which he was using, twitched and contracted to help him on. My back humped as I saw him crawl into the chimney, and my hand opened to seize the trunk as he reached up.

‘Go on, Maubert, you’re all right now.’

He had got himself into an awkward position underneath the bush and could not manage to seize the trunk. I caught his wrist in both my hands and all but made him loose his hold. Then he was at my side, pale as a ghost, with everything whirling round him.

It was then I said

‘I’ve won, I’ve won.’

We moved away from the precipice a little. It rejoiced me to have conquered the wall. We should never have done it with Jean. I had done it because Maubert was my enemy, and I would have

preferred death rather than say to him as to one of my chums 'It's crazy It can't be done

Maubert, too, would never have done it without me We had carried our childish skill and courage beyond what they could have achieved of themselves So it would be all through our lives I should go forward always, not to remain behind Maubert, my enemy

But anyhow we were friends now Friends, because deep in us we shared the same loves, the same joy—putting ourselves against the things of our own countryside We both talked the local speech, we had both roamed the same mountains, and climbed the same peaks Lying stretched out among the last thin chestnut trees where the holly and pines thinned out, relaxing after our efforts and proud of having together conquered the same rock face, we began reminiscing in the way only possible to those who have grown up from childhood together

Next best to the mountains, I'm happiest among our vines'

Where? At Elze?

They're the only ones we have We've an old chap working, helps us make our wine A wonderfully handy chap, full of stories

It's a jolly good place, Elze It only catches the sun in the morning though Still, it's just as good

We've got the sun all day, we have

At Goulsou?

'D you know our vines then? But you've never been there, have you?

You've got a magnolia and a cypress in front of the house And fig trees against the top wall

You've been there then?

I've seen it from the turn in the new road I even climbed the wall once just under the plum tree I know the sort of spot you like'

So we went on talking about things and people Together we made the tour of our domains, conscious that the same waters bathed them and that the same odours, rich with the same fruits, enveloped them both Speaking together thus, we plunged into a similar past peopled with wiry peasants, muscular and taciturn, and men of the uplands, worn to the same pattern by toil and ex-

posure to the elements. Looking at each other we could see obvious traces of the same blood mingling in each of us. Maubert, smaller than myself, was solid and broad shouldered, with a round head and blue eyes under the line of bristly hair. He looked like my mother's grandfather whose portrait we still possessed. I, on the other hand, thin and tall, with prominent chin and narrow face, too strongly resembled our shepherds and herdsmen for there to be any doubt as to the race to which I belonged. The homogeneity of our race derived from all its many minglings, and among us, in each family line, distant and remote types would suddenly reappear in an inextricable fraternity of the flesh, the bones, the pigmentation, and the profound urges of the whole being.

What could turn us into enemies now? We had no longer any secrets from each other. Everything we loved we could now possess in common. No longer was there any need to keep each to his own side of the mountain.

Meanwhile by the open passes to the north, evening began to descend, urging its shadows forward to meet the clouds that rushed to climb the heavens from the sea. It was time to think of getting back. Through pasturage and woods, and between the rocky bluffs, we rushed downwards to the town. Already we had passed two children returning to their farm in the valley, who turned to gaze in astonishment at seeing us together. Sitting on a wall of dry stones, an old man seemed to gaze after us with a derisive smile. It embarrassed us to be walking together, and as we had slowed down to a walk to catch our breaths again, Maubert said, though without looking at me:

You'd better leave me before we get to Rochebelle.

So you're ashamed to be seen with me? I'll tell everybody we aren't together, if you like.

I'm not with you! said Maubert with an obstinate expression.

He began to run again, and when he had got about a hundred yards ahead dropped to a walk, looking about leisurely on every side, like someone out walking by himself. I followed without bothering about him, but also without taking any precaution to observe our distances. Insensibly I drew nearer. On this, after glancing behind him several times, Maubert turned, and I saw

him shouting something at me, though I could not hear the words, while his face appeared distorted with rage I began gathering stones and started running to get somewhat nearer to him

Oh, you want to go in front, do you? See if this will help you then

Maubert fled, but even while he did so, flung a couple of stones at me that whistled round my head I met them by jumping right and left and then stopped to hurl them in my turn Bent double in the act, and before even the stone had touched the ground, I shouted at him like a threat, in which perhaps, too, was something of regret

‘I ll get you yet I ll get you yet some day ’

1935

WALLACE STEGNER



The View from the Balcony

The fraternity house where they lived that summer was a good deal like a barracks, with its dormitory cut up into eight little plywood cells each with one dormer window, and its two shower rooms divided between the men and the women. They communized their cooking in the one big kitchen and ate together at a refectory table forty feet long. But the men were all young, all veterans, all serious students, and most of the wives worked part time in the university, so that their home life was a thing that constantly disintegrated and re-formed, and they got along with a minimum of friction.

The lounge, as big as a basketball court, they hardly used. What they did use, daytime and nighttime, the thing that converted the austere barracks life into something sumptuous and country clubbish, was the rooftop deck that stretched out from the lounge over the ten car garage.

Directly under the bluff to which the house clung ran the transcontinental highway, but the deck was hidden and protected above it. At night the air was murmurous with insects, and sitting there they would be bumped by blundering June bugs and feel the velvet kiss of moths. By standing up they could see the centerline of the highway palely emergent in the glow of the street lamp at the end of the drive. Beyond the highway, flowing with it in the same smooth curve, low banked and smooth and dark and touched only with sparks and glimmers of light, was the Wawasee River.

More than a mile of the far shore was kept wild as a city park and across those deep woods on insect haunted nights, when

traffic noise died for a moment and the night hung still around them, they could hear the lions roar

The lions were in the zoo at the other side of the park. At first it was a shock to the students in the fraternity house to hear that heavy-chested, coughing, snarling roar, a more dangerous and ominous sound than should be heard in any American night, and for a moment any of them could have believed that the midland heat of the night was tropical heat and that real and wild lions of an ancient incorrigible ferocity roamed the black woods beyond the river. But after a week or two the nightly roaring had become as commonplace as the sound of traffic along the highway, and they rarely noticed it.

Altogether the fraternity house was a good place, in spite of the tasteless ostentation of the big echoing lounge and the Turkish bath heat of the sleeping cubicles. They were lucky to be in it. They felt how lucky they were, and people who came out to drink beer on weekends kept telling them how lucky they were. So many less lucky ones were crammed into backstairs rooms or regimented into converted barracks. Out here there was a fine spaciousness, a view, a freedom. They were terribly lucky.

Deep in a sun-struck daydream, drowning in light and heat, the sun like a weight on her back and her body slippery with perspiration and her mouth pushed wetly out of shape against her wrist, Lucy Graham lay alone on the deck in the sultry paralysis of afternoon. Her eyes looked into an empty red darkness, in her mind the vague voluptuous uncoiling of memory and fantasy was slowed almost to a stop, stunned almost to sleep.

All around her the afternoon was thick, humid, stirring with the slow fecundities of Midwestern summer—locust-shrill and bird-cheep and fly-buzz, child shout and the distant chime of four o'clock from the university's clock tower. Cars on the highway grew from hum to buzz, sawdust whine and slapped past and diminished, coming away to a point of sound, a humming speck. Deep inside the house a door banged, and she heard the scratch of her own eyelashes against her wrist as she blinked, thinking groggily that it was time to get up and shower. Everyone would be coming home soon, Tommy Probst would be through with his ex-

ams by four thirty, and tonight there would be a celebration and a keg of beer

For a while longer she lay thinking of Tommy, wishing Charley were as far along as that, with his thesis done and nothing but the formalities left Then it struck her as odd, the life they all lived this sheltered, protected present tipping ever so slightly toward the assured future After what they had been, navigator and bombardier, Signal Corps major, artillery captain Navy lieutenant and yeoman and signalman first class, herself a WAAF and two or three of the other wives WACS or WAVES—after being these things it was almost comic of them to be so seriously and deeply involved in becoming psychologists, professors, pharmacists, historians

She sat up, her head swimming and the whole world a sheeted glare Lifting the hair from her neck, she let the cooling air in and shook her head at the absurdity of lying in the sun until her brains were addled and her eyes almost fried from her head But in England there had never been the time, rarely the place, seldom the sun She was piggy about the sun as she had been at first about the food From here England seemed very scrawny and very dear, but very far away Looking at her arm, she could not believe the pagan color of her own skin

Quick steps came across the terrazzo floor of the lounge, and Phyllis Probst stepped out, hesitating in the door Have you seen anything of Tommy?

No, Lucy said Is he through his exams already?

An extraordinarily complex look came over Phyllis face She looked hot, her hair was stringy, she seemed half out of breath Her brows frowned and her mouth smiled a quick weak smile and her eyes jumped from Lucy out across the highway and back again

Lucy stood up 'Is something wrong?

'No, Phyllis said No, it's just You haven't seen him at all?

'Nobody's been home I did hear a door bang just a minute ago, though

That was me, Phyllis said I thought he might have come home and gone to bed

Phyllis, is he sick? Lucy said and took Phyllis arm She felt the arm tremble Still with the terrified, anxious, distressed expression on her face, Phyllis began to cry

I've got to find him, she said, and tried to pull away

We'll find him, Lucy said What happened? Tell me

He I don't know Helen Fast called me from the Graduate School office about two I don't know whether he got sick, or whether the questions were too hard, or what Helen said he came out once and asked for a typewriter, because he's left handed and he smudges so when he writes, and she gave him a portable But in a few minutes he came out again and put the portable on her desk and gave her a queer desperate look and walked out

Oh, what a shame,' Lucy said, and with her arm around Phyllis sought for something else to say

But where is he? Phyllis asked I called the police and the hospital and I went to every beer joint in town

Don't worry, Lucy said, and pushed her gently inside You come and take a cool shower and relax We'll send the boys hunting when they come

They came half a household of them, before the two girls were halfway up the stairs and they brought Tommy with them He walked through the door like a prisoner among deputies, quietly, his dark smooth head bent a little as if in thought Lucy saw his eyes lift and meet his wife's in an indescribable look Thanks for the lift, Tommy said to Charley Graham, and went up the stairs and took his wife's arm and together they went down the corridor

Lucy came back down to where her husband stood

'What on earth happened?

He pursed up his lips, lifted his shoulders delicately, looked at the others who were dispersing toward dormitory and shower room We cruised the park on a hunch and found him over there tossing sticks in the river, Charley said

'Why didn't he take the exams?

Her husband lifted his shoulders again

But it's so absurd! she said He could have written the Lord's Prayer backward and they would have passed him It was just a ritual, like an initiation Everyone said so

Of course,' he said 'It was a cinch' He put an arm across her shoulders, made a face as if disgusted by the coco butter gooniness and kissed her from a great distance Kind of dampens the party '

We'd better not have it '

Why not? I'm going to ask Richards and Latour to come over They can straighten Tommy out

Will they give him another chance, do you think?

Give him? Charley said They'll force it on him

In the lounge after dinner the atmosphere was weighted and awkward Lucy had a feeling that somehow, without in any way agreeing on it, the whole lot of them had arrived at a policy of elaborately ignoring what had happened to Tommy Faced with the uncomfortable alternatives of ignoring it or of slapping him on the back, encouraging him, they had chosen the passive way It was still too hot on the deck for sitting, in the lounge they were too aware of each other Some hunted up corners and dove into books The others lounged and waited Watching them, Lucy saw how the eyes strayed to Tommy when his back was turned, judging him She saw that look even in Charley's face, the contempt that narrowed the eyes and fluttered the nostrils As if geared up to play a part, Tommy stayed, looking self consciously tragic His wife was around him like an anxious hen

Donna Earp stood up suddenly into a silence Lord, it's sultry, she said I wish it would rain

She went out on deck, and Lucy and Charley followed her The sun was dazzling and immense behind the maple tree that overhung the corner Shadows stretched almost across the quiet river The roof was warm through Lucy's shoes, and the railing was hot to her hand

Has anyone talked to him at all? she said

Charley shook his head, shrugged in that Frenchy little way he had

'Won't it look queer?'

Richards and Latour are coming They'll talk to him '

What about getting the beer, then? It's like a funeral in there

Funeral! Charley said, and snorted That's another thing that

happened today Quite a day He looked at the sun, disintegrating behind the trees

Whose funeral?

Kay Cedarquist's

Who's she?

She's a girl, he said 'Maybe I'd better get the beer, I'll tell you later about the funeral It's a howl

Sounds like a peculiar funeral

Peculiar is a small word for it, he said In the doorway he met Art Morris, and haled him along to get the beer

After the glare, the shade of the tree was wonderful Lucy sat on the railing looking over the river, and a car pulled into the drive and parked with its nose against the bluff Paul Latour, the psychology professor, and Clark Richards, head of the department of social science, got out and held assisting hands for Myra, Richards' young wife For several seconds the three stood looking up, smiling They seemed struck by something none of them spoke until Professor Richards with his hand in his bosom took a stance and said

O! she doth teach the torches to burn bright

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

Like a rich jewel in an Ethiopian's ear

He was a rather chesty man, neat in a white suit, in the violet shadow of the court his close clipped mustache smudged his mouth Latour's grim and difficult smile was upturned beside him, Myra Richards' schoolgirl face swam below there like a lily on a pond Hi, lucky people, Myra said What repulsively romantic surroundings!

Come up, Lucy said It's cooler at this altitude

They made her feel pretty, they took away the gloom that Tommy Probst's failure had dropped upon them all When you were all working through the assured present to the assured future, it was more than a personal matter when someone failed Ever since dinner they had been acting as if the foundations were shaken, and she knew why She was glad Richards and Latour were here, outsiders, older, with better perspective

As she sat waiting for them the lion roared, harsh and heavy across the twilight river. Down, Bruno! Henry Earp said automatically, and there was a laugh. The door banged open, and Charley and Art staggered the keg through, to set it up on a table. The talk lifted suddenly in tempo. The guests stepped out onto the deck in a chorus of greeting, the lounge emptied itself, lugubrious Probsts and all, into the open air. Gloom dissolved in the promise of festivity. Charley drew the first soapy glasses from the keg. Far across several wooded bends the university's clock tower, lacy and soaring, was pinned suddenly against the sky by the floodlights.

She saw them working on Tommy during the evening. Within the first half hour, Clark Richards took him over in the corner, and Lucy saw them talking there, an attractive picture of *magister* and *studens*, Tommy with his dark head bent and his face smoothed perfectly expressionless, Richards solid and confident and reassuring. She saw him leave Tommy with a clap on the shoulder, and saw Tommy's smile that was like spoken thanks, and then Phyllis came slipping over to where Tommy stood, wanting to be told of the second chance. Some time later, when the whole party had been loosened by beer and a caful of other students had arrived, and the twilight was so far gone into dusk that the river was only a faint metallic shine along the foot of the woods, Paul Latour hooked his arm into Tommy's and unsmiling looking glum as a detective, led him inside. By that time the party was loud.

Lucy stayed on the fringes of it, alert to her duties as hostess, knowing that the other girls forgot any such responsibilities as soon as they had a couple of drinks. She rescued glasses for people who set them down, kept edging through the crowd around the keg to get glasses filled, talked with new arrivals, circulated quietly, seeing that no bashful student got shoved off into a corner, making sure that Myra Richards didn't get stranded anywhere. But after a half hour she quit worrying about Myra, Myra was drinking a good deal and having a fine gay time.

It did not cool off much with the dark. The deck was breathless and sticky, and they drank their beer fast because it warmed

so rapidly in the glass. Inside, as she paused by the keg, Lucy saw Latour and Tommy still talking head to head in the lighted lounge. Cocking her head a little, she listened to the sound of the party, appraising it. She heard Myra's laugh and a series of groans and hoots from the boys, apparently at someone's joke.

She moved away from the brittle concentration of noise and out toward the rail, and as she passed through the crowd she heard Art Morris say, "I got the Westminster Choir and a full symphony orchestra to do singing commercials. That's what Hollywood is, one big assembled empty Technique. They hunt mosquitoes with 155's."

No one was constrained any more, everything was loose and bibulous. As she leaned on the rail a voice spoke at her shoulder, and she turned to see Professor Richards with a glass of beer in his hand and his coat off. But he still looked dignified because he had kept his tie on and his sleeves rolled down. Most of the boys were down to T-shirts, and a girl who had come with the carload of students was in a halter that was hardly more than a bra. She was out in an open space now, twirling, showing the full ballerina skirt she had made out of an India print bedspread.

Find any breeze? Richards said.

No, just looking at the river.

It's very peaceful, he said. You're lucky to have this place.

I know. She brushed an insect from her sticky cheek. It was pleasant to her to be near this man, with his confidence and his rich resonant voice, and a privilege that they could all know him on such informal terms. Until six months ago he had been something big and important in the American Military Government in Germany.

He was saying, How do you like it by now? It's a good bit different from England.

I'm liking it wonderfully, she said. People have been lovely. Thoroughly acclimated?

Not quite to this heat.

This just makes the corn grow, he said, and she heard in his voice, with forgiving amusement that it should be there in the voice of this so distinguished man, the thing she had heard in so many American voices—the confidence they had that every-

thing American was bigger and better and taller and colder and hotter and wider and deeper than anything else I've seen it a hundred degrees at two in the morning, Richards said Inside a house, of course

It must be frightful "

He shrugged, smiling with his smudged mouth in the semi darkness Myra and I slept three nights on the golf course last time we had that kind of weather'

We've already slept out here a night or two, Lucy said She looked across the shadowy, crowded, noisy deck Where is Myra? I haven't had a chance to talk to her at all

A while ago she was arguing Zionism with a bunch of the boys, Richards said He chuckled with his full-chested laugh, indulgent and avuncular She knows nothing whatever about Zionism'

Lucy had a brief moment of wondering how a professor really looked upon his students Could he feel completely at ease among men and women of so much less experience and learning, or did he always have a bit of the paternal in his attitude? And when he married a girl out of one of his classes, as Professor Richards had, did he ever—and did *she* ever—get over feeling that he was God omnipotent?

I imagine you must feel a little as I did when I got back from Germany, he was saying 'After living under such a cloud of fear and shortages and loss, suddenly to come out into the sun'

Yes,' she said I've felt it I take the sun like medicine "

'It's too bad we can't sweep that cloud away for the whole world, Richards said He looked out over the river, and she thought his voice had a stern, austere ring England particularly England looked straight in the face of disaster and recognized it for what it was and fought on It's a pity the cloud is still there They've earned something better'

'Yes' she said again, for some reason vaguely embarrassed Talk about England's grit always bothered her You didn't talk about it when you were in any of it Why should it be talked about outside? To dispel the slight pompous silence she said, I saw you talking to Tommy Probst'

Richards laughed Momentary funk, he said 'It's preposterous He's one of the best students we've had in years He'll come up and take it again tomorrow and pass it like a shot

He touched her shoulder with a pat that was almost fatherly, almost courtly, and lifted his empty glass in explanation and drifted away

In the corner by the beer keg, people were jammed in a tight group A yell of laughter went up, hoots, wolf calls As the lounge door let a brief beam of light across the deck Lucy saw Myra in the middle of the crowd Her blond hair glinted silver white, her eyes had a sparkle, her mouth laughed A vivid face No wonder Professor Richards had picked her out of a whole class

Charley broke out of the crowd shaking his head and grinning, bony shouldered in the T shirt He put a damp arm around her and held his glass for her to sip How's my Limey bride?

Steamed like a pudding, she said It sounds like a good party over here '

He gave her a sidelong down mouthed look Doak was just telling the saga of the funeral

Laughter broke out again, and Myra's voice said, Doak, I think that's the most awful thing I've ever '

Tell me, Lucy said, what's so screamingly funny about a girl's funeral?

Didn't you ever hear about Kay Cedarquist?

No

She was an institution Schoenkampf's lab assistant, over in Biology She had cancer That's what she died of, day before yesterday

Lucy waited Is it just that I'm British?'

Wiping beer from his lips with his knuckles, Charley grinned at her in the shadow Nothing is so funny to Americans as a corpse, he said Unless it's a decaying corpse, or one that falls out of the coffin Read Faulkner, read Caldwell Kay sort of fell out of the coffin '

Oh my God, Lucy said, appalled

Oh, not really See, she was Schoenkampf's mistress as well as his assistant He's got a wife and four kids and they're all nudists

I'll tell you about them too some time But Schoenkampf also had Kay, and he set her up in an apartment

He drank again, raised a long admonishing finger *But,* he said When Schoenkampf was home with Mrs Schoenkampf and the four nudist children, Kay had a painter from Terre Haute He spent a lot of time in our town and painted murals all over Kay's walls haven't I ever told you about those murals?

No

Gentle Wawasee River scenes Charley said Happy farm children in wood lot and pasture, quiet creeks, steeped towns Kay told Schoenkampf she had it done because art rested her nerves She had this double feature going right up to the time she died, practically

'You're making this all up,' Lucy said

He put his hands around her waist and lifted her to the rail Sit up here Confidential and grinning he leaned over her, letting her in on the inside It was a pose she had loved in him when they walked all over Salisbury talking and talking and talking, when they were both in uniform

But if she had cancer, she said, "wasn't she ill, in bed?"

'Not till the last month He knocked the bottom of his glass lightly against the stone and seemed to brood, half amused She was a good deal of a mess, he said Also, she had dozens of short subjects besides her double feature Graduate students, married or single, she wasn't fussy Nobody took her cancer very seriously Then all of a sudden she up and died

Lucy stirred almost angrily, moving her arm away from his sticky bare skin I don't think all that's funny, Charley

"Maybe not But Kay had no relatives at all, so Schoenkampf had to arrange the funeral To keep himself out of it as much as possible, he got a bunch of students to act as pallbearers Every one of them had passed his qualifying exams That was what got the snickers'

'Graduate students?' Lucy said What have their qualifying exams to do? Then she saw and giggled involuntarily, and was angry at herself for giggling Over the heads of the crowd she saw the group of students still clustered in the corner They had linked arms in a circle and were singing 'I Wanted Wings'

Myra was still among them, between Doak and the girl in the bra and the India print bedspread

‘Who?’ she said Doak and Jackson and that crowd?

They led the parade, Charley said and snorted like a horse into his glass ‘I guess there were three or four unfortunates who couldn’t find an empty handle on the coffin

Sitting quietly, the stone still faintly warm through her dress, she felt as if a greasy film had spread over her mind. It was such a nasty little sordid story from beginning to end, sneaking and betrayal and double betrayal and fear and that awful waiting, and finally death and heartless grins. Well, Charley said, ‘I see you don’t like my tale

She turned toward him, vaguely and impulsively wanting reassurance. Charley, was she pretty?

No, he said. Not pretty at all, just easy

What she wanted, the understanding, wasn’t there. ‘I think it’s wry,’ she said. Just wry and awful

It ought to be, he said, but somehow it isn’t. Not if you knew Kay. You didn’t

With a kind of dismay she heard herself say, not knowing until she said it that there was that much distress and that much venom in her, the thing that leaped abruptly and unfairly to her mind. Did *you*?

He stared at her, frowned, looked amazed, and then grinned, and the moment he grinned it was all right again, she could laugh and they were together and not apart. But when he waved his glass and suggested that they go see how the beer was holding out she shook her head and stayed behind on the railing. As he worked his way tall through the jam of shadowy people she had an impulse to jump down and follow him so that not even twenty feet of separation could come desperately between. But the bray of talk and laughter from the deck was like a current that pinned her back against the faintly warm stone, threatening to push her off, and she looked behind her once into the dark pit of the court and tightened her hands on the railing

She disliked everyone there for being strangers, aliens to her and to her ways of feeling, unable from their vast plateau of

security to see or understand the desperation and fear down below. And even while she hated them for it, she felt a pang of black and bitter envy of that untroubled assurance they all had, that way of shrugging off trouble because no trouble that could not be cured had ever come within their experience. Even the war—a temporary unpleasantness. *Their* homes hadn't leaped into unquenchable flame or shaken down in rubble and dust. *They* had known no families in Coventry. Fighting the war, they could still feel not desperate but magnanimous, like good friends who reached out to help an acquaintance in a scuffle.

She hated them, and as she saw Paul Latour approaching her and knew she could not get away, she hated him worst of all. His face was like the face of a predatory bird, beaked, grim-lipped, because of some eye trouble he always wore dark glasses, and his prying, intent, hidden stare was an agony to encounter. His mouth was hooked back in a constant sardonic smile. He not merely undressed her with his eyes, he dissected her most intimate organs, and she knew he was a cruel man, no matter how consistently and amazingly kind he had been to Charley, almost like a father, all the way through school. Charley said he had a mind like a fine watch. But she wished he would not come over, and she trembled, unaccountably emotional, feeling trapped.

Then he was in front of her, big-shouldered for his height, not burly but somehow giving the impression of great strength, and his face like the cold face of a great bird thrust toward her and the hidden stare stabbed into her and the thin smile tightened.

Nobody to play with? he asked. There was every unpleasant and cutting suggestion in the remark. A wallflower. Maybe halitosis. Perhaps B O.

She came back quickly enough. Too hot to play. To steer the talk away from her she said, 'You've been conferring with Tommy.'

'Yes,' he said, and a spasm of what seemed almost contempt twisted across his mouth. 'I've been conferring with Tommy.'

Is he all right now?

What do you mean, all right?

'Is he over his trouble?'

"He is if he can make up his mind to grow up."

Now it was her turn 'What do you mean?

The dark circles of his glasses stared at her blankly, and then she realized that Latour was laughing. I thought you were an intelligent woman.

'I'm not,' she said half bitterly. 'I'm stupid.'

His laugh was still there, an almost soundless chuckle. Beyond him the circle of singers had widened to include almost everyone on the deck, and thirty people were bellowing. 'We were sailing a lo-o-o ng, on Moonlight Bay.'

Latour came closer, to be heard. 'You mean to tell me you haven't even yet got wise to Tommy?

I don't know what you mean. He's a very good student—'

Oh, student! Latour said. 'Sure, he's a student. There's nothing wrong with his brains. He's just a child, that's all, he never grew up.'

A counterattraction to the singing had started in the lounge. A few of the energetic had turned on the radio and were dancing on the smooth terrazzo floor. Lucy saw figures float by the lighted door. Donna and Henry Earp, the Kinseys, Doak and Myra Richards, Tommy and Phyllis. The radio cut quick and active across the dragging tempo of the singing.

But he was in the air force three years, she said. 'He's a grown man, he's been through a lot. I never saw anything childish in him.'

He turned his head, his profile was cruel and iron against the light. 'You're disgustingly obtuse,' his mocking voice said. 'What did *you* make of that show he put on today?

I don't know,' she said, hesitating. 'That he was afraid, I suppose.'

Afraid of what?

Of what? That he'd fail, that he wouldn't make it after all.'

Go to the foot of the class.

Pardon?

Go to the foot of the class, Latour said. 'Look at the record. Only child, doting mother. I knew him as an undergraduate and he's been trying for five or six years to break loose. Or he thought he was. If it hadn't been for the war he'd have found out sooner that he wasn't. The war came just as he graduated, just right so

He could hide in it. He could even make a show like a hero, like a flyboy. But not as a pilot, notice. He busted out in pilot training. Somebody else would have the real responsibility. After the war, back to school where he's still safe, with GI benefits and no real decisions to make. And then all of a sudden he wakes up and he's pretty near through. In about three hours he'll be out in the bright light all by himself with a Ph.D. in his hand and a career to make and no mother, no Army, no university, to cuddle him. He wasn't afraid of that exam, he was afraid of passing it.

Lucy was silent. She believed him completely, the pattern watched at every edge, but she rebelled at the triumph and contempt in his voice. Suppose he was completely right. Tommy Probst was still his student and presumably his friend, somebody to like and help, not someone to triumph over. Sticky with the slow ooze of perspiration, feeling the hot night dense and smothering around her, she moved restlessly on the rail. Latour reached into the pocket of his seersucker jacket and brought out a pint bottle.

Drink? I've been avoiding the bellywash everyone else is drinking'

'No thank you,' Lucy said. 'Couldn't I get you a glass and some ice?'

'I like it warm,' he said. 'Keeps me reminded that it's poison.'

She saw then what she had not seen before, that he was quite drunk, but out of her vague rebelliousness she said, 'Mr. Latour, all the boys are in Tommy's position almost exactly, aren't they? They're right at that edge where they have to be fully responsible adults. They all work much too hard. Any of them could crack just the way Tommy did. Charley could do it. It isn't a disgrace.'

Latour's head went back, the bottle to his lips, and for a moment he was a bird drinking, his iron beak in the air, at once terrible and ridiculous. You needn't worry about Charley, he said when he had brought the bottle down. Charley's another breed of rat. He's the kind that wants to wear the old man's breeches even before they're off the old man's legs. Tommy's never got over calling me Sir. Charley'd eat me tomorrow if he thought he could get away with it.

Who'd do what? Charley said. He had appeared behind

Latour with two glasses in his hands. He passed one to Lucy with a quick lift of the eyebrows and she loved him again for having seen that she was trapped.

You, you ungrateful whelp, Latour said. He dropped the bottle in his pocket, his blank stare and forward-thrusting face seemed to challenge Charley. I'll tell you what you think. You think you're younger than I am. That's right. You think you're better looking than I am. Maybe that's right too. You think you could put me down. That's a foolish mistake. You think you're as smart as I am, and that's even more foolish. His thumb jerked up under Charley's wishbone like a disemboweling knife, and Charley grunted. Given half a chance, Latour said, you'd open your wolfish jaws and swallow me. You're like the cannibals who think it gives them virtue to eat their enemy's heart. You'd eat mine.

He's distraught, Charley said to Lucy. Maybe we should get him into a tepid bath.

You and who else? Latour said, like a belligerent kid. His sardonic fixed grin turned on Lucy. You can see how it goes in his mind. I develop a lot of apparatus for testing perception, and I fight the whole damn university till I get a lab equipped with sound equipment and Phonelescopes and oscillographs and electronic microscopes, and then punks like this one come along and pick my brains and think they know as much as the old man. I give them the equipment and provide them with ideas and supervise their work and let them add their names to mine on scholarly articles, and they think they're all ready to put on the old man's breeches.

Why Paul, Charley said, you've got an absolute anxiety neurosis. You should see a psychiatrist. You'll brood yourself into paranoia and begin to have persecution complexes. You've got one now. Here I've been holding you up all year, and you think I'm secretly plotting to eat you. You really should talk to a good psychologist.

Like who? Latour said, grinning. Some punk like you whose soft spot hasn't hardened yet?

There are one or two others almost as good, Charley said, "but Graham is the best."

Latour took the bottle from his pocket and drank again and

screwed on the cap and dropped the bottle back in the pocket. His stare never left Charley's face, his soundless chuckle broke out into a snort.

A punk,' he said. A callow juvenile, a pubescent boy, a beardless youth. You're still in the spanking stage.

Winking at Lucy, Charley said, 'Takes a good man

Oh, not so good,' Latour said. 'Any *man* could do it.'

His hand shot out for Charley's wrist, and Charley jerked back, slopping his beer. It seemed to Lucy that something bright and alert had leaped up in both of them, and she wanted to tell them to drop it, but the noise of singing and the moan of dance music from the lounge made such a current of noise that she didn't trust her voice against it. But Latour's edged foolery bothered her, she didn't think he was entirely joking, and she didn't think Charley thought so either. She watched them scuffle and shove each other, assuming exaggeratedly the starting pose for a wrestling match. Latour reached in his pocket and handed her the almost empty whisky bottle, he removed his glasses and passed them to her, and she saw his eyes like dark holes with a glint of light at the bottom.

For heaven's sake, she said, you're not going to

Latour exploded into violent movement, reached and leaned and jerked in a flash, and suddenly Charley's length was across his shoulder, held by crotch and neck, and Latour with braced legs was staggering forward. He was headed directly for the rail. Charley's legs kicked frantically, his arm whipped around Latour's neck in a headlock, but Latour was brutally strong. Face twisted under Charley's arm, he staggered ahead.

Lucy screamed, certain for a moment that Latour was going to throw Charley over. But her husband's legs kicked free, and he swung sideward to get his feet on the floor. Latour let go his neck hold, and his palms slapped against Charley's body as he shifted. Charley was clinging to his headlock, twisting the blockier Latour into a crouch. Then somehow Latour dove under him, and they crashed.

The whole crowd was around them, shutting off the light from the lounge so that the contestants grunted and struggled in almost total darkness. Lucy bent over them, screaming at Charley to quit

it, let go. Someone moved in the crowd, and in a brief streak of light she saw Latour's hands, iron strong, tearing Charley's locked fingers apart, and the veins ridged on Charley's neck as he clung to his hold.

Stop it! she screamed at them. You'll get all dirty, you'll get hurt, stop it, please Charley!

Latour broke free and spun Charley like a straw man, trying to get a hold for a slam. But as they went to the floor again Charley's legs caught him in a head scissors and bent him harshly back.

'Great God,' Henry Earp said beside Lucy. 'What is this, fun or fight?'

'I don't know,' she said. 'Fun. But make them stop.' She grabbed the arm of Clark Richards. 'Make them stop, please!'

Richards bent over the wrestlers, quiet now, Latour's head forced back and Charley lying still, just keeping the pressure on. 'Come on,' Richards said. He slapped them both on the back. 'Bout's a draw. Let go, Charley.'

Latour's body arched with a convulsive spring, but Charley's legs clenched tighter and crushed him down again.

'Okay with me,' Charley said. 'You satisfied with a draw, Paul?'

Latour said nothing. 'All right,' Richards said. 'Let's call it off, Paul. Someone might get hurt.'

As Charley unlocked his legs and rolled free, Latour was up and after him like a wolf, but Richards and Henry and several others held him back. He put a hand to his neck and stood panting. 'That was a dirty hold, Graham.'

'Not so dirty as getting dumped twenty feet into a courtyard,' Charley said. 'His T-shirt was ripped half off him.' He grinned fixedly at Latour. 'Sick and fluttery at what had happened, Lucy took his hand, knowing that it was over now, the support was gone, the rest of the way was against difficulties all the way. 'You foolish people,' she said. 'You'll spoil a good party.'

Somehow, by the time she had got herself together after her scare, the party had disintegrated. The unmarried graduate students who had been noisily there all evening had vanished, several

of the house couples had gone quietly to bed. The keg was empty, and a half-bottle of whisky stood unwanted on the table. A whole carful of people had gone out the Terre Haute road for sandwiches, taking Paul Latour with them. The court below the rail was empty except for Charley's jeep and Clark Richards' sedan, and the deck was almost deserted, when Richards stepped out of the lounge with his white coat on, ready to go home.

He came from light into darkness, so that for a moment he stood turning his head, peering. "Myra?" he said. "We should be getting on."

"She isn't out here," Lucy said, and jumped down from the railing where she had been sitting talking to Charley. "Isn't she in the lounge?"

"I just looked," Richards said. "Maybe she's gone up to the ladies' room."

He came out to lean against the rail near them, looking out across the darkness to the floodlighted clock tower floating in the sky. It's a little like the spire of Salisbury Cathedral, isn't it?" he said. "Salisbury Cathedral across the Avon." He turned his face toward Lucy. "Isn't that where you're from, Salisbury?"

"Yes," she said, "it is rather like."

Then an odd thing happened. The southwest horizon leaped up suddenly, black and jagged, hill and tree and floating tower, with the green glow of heat lightning behind it, and when the lightning winked out, the tower went with it, leaving only the unbroken dark. "Wasn't that queer?" she said. "They must have turned off the floodlights just at that instant. It was almost as if the lightning wiped it out."

They were all tired, yawning, languid with the late hour and the beer and the unremitting, oozing heat. Richards looked at his watch, holding it so that light from the lounge fell on it. "Where can Myra be?" he said. "It's one o'clock."

Slowly Charley slid off the rail, groaning. "Could she be sick? Did she have too much, you think?"

"I don't know," Richards said. His voice was faintly snappish, irritated. "I don't think so, but she could have, I suppose."

"Let me just look up in the shower room," Lucy said, and

slipped away from them, through the immense hot lounge Art Morris was asleep in the big sofa, looking greasy with sweat under the bluish light. Down the long wide hall she felt like a tiny lost figure in a nightmare and thought what a really queer place this was to live in, after all. So big it forgot about you. She pushed the door, felt for the switch. Light leaped on the water beaded tile, the silence opened to the lonely drip of a tap. No one was in the shower room, no shoes showed under the row of toilet doors.

When she got back to the deck, someone had turned on the powerful light above the door, and the party lay in wreckage there a surly shambles of slopped beer and glasses and wadded napkins and trampled cigarette butts. In that light the Earps and Charley and Richards were looking at each other abashed.

It's almost a cinch she went with the others out to the Casino, Charley was saying. There was a whole swarm of them went together.

You'd think she would have said something. Richards said. His voice was so harsh that Lucy looked at him in surprise and saw his mouth tight and thin, his face drawn with inordinate anxiety. She wasn't upstairs?

Lucy shook her head. For an instant Richards stood with his hands opening and closing at his sides. Abruptly he strode to the rail and looked over it, following it around to the corner and peering over into the tangle of weeds and rubbish at the side. He spun around as if he feared guns were pointed at his back. Who saw her last? What was she doing? Who was she with?

No one spoke for a moment, until Henry Earp said cautiously, "She was dancing a while ago, a whole bunch of us were. But that was a half hour ago, at least.

Who with? Richards said, and then slapped at the air with his hand and said, No, that wouldn't tell us anything. She must have gone for a sandwich.

We can go see, Charley said. Matter of fact, I'd like a sandwich myself. Why don't we run up the road and see if she's at the Casino? She probably didn't notice what time it was.

No,' Richards said grimly. Lucy found it hard to look at him. She was so troubled with sympathy and embarrassment. Probably

she didn't. He looked at Charley almost vaguely, and sweat was up on his forehead. Would you mind? he said. Perhaps I ought to stay here, in case she

I'll stay here, Lucy said. The distraught vague eyes touched her.

You'll want something to eat too. You go along.

'No,' she said. I'd rather stay. I would anyway. To Charley she said, Why don't you and Henry and Donna go? You could look in at the Casino and the Tavern and all those places along there.

With his arm around her he walked her to the lounge door, and everything that had passed that evening was in their look just before he kissed her. When she turned around Richards was watching. In the bald light, swarming with insects that crawled and leaped and fluttered toward the globe above the doors, his eyes seemed to glare. Lucy clicked off the light and dropped them back into darkness.

Should you like a drink? she said into the black. After a moment he answered, No, thank you.

Gradually his white suited figure emerged again as her eyes adjusted. He was on the rail looking out across the river and woods. Heat lightning flared fitfully again along the staring black horizon. The jeep started down below them, the lights jumped against the bluff, turned twisting the shadows, and were gone with the diminishing motor.

'Don't worry,' Lucy said. I'm sure she just forgot about the time and went for something to eat. We should have had something here, but somehow with so many to plan things, nothing ever gets planned.

'I don't like that river,' Richards said. It's so absolutely black down there. He swung around at her. Have you got a flashlight?

I think so," she said, but don't you suppose——"

Could I borrow it, please? he said. I'm going down along the bank to look. If you'd stay here—if she should come back.

She slipped in and past the still sleeping Art Morris and found a flashlight in the kitchen drawer and now suddenly it was as if she were five years back in time, the cool tube in her hand, the

intense blackout darkness around, the sense of oppression, the waiting, the search That sense was even stronger a few minutes later as she sat on the rail and saw the thin slash of the light down along the riverbank, moving slowly, cutting on and off, eventually disappearing in the trees

It was very still Perched on the rail, she looked out from the deck they were so lucky to have, over the night obliterated view that gave them such a sense of freedom and space, and in all the dark there was no sound louder than the brush of a moth's wings or the tick of an armored bug against the driveway light Then far up the highway a point of sound bored into the silence and grew and rounded, boring through layers of dark and soundless air, until it was a rush and a threat and a roar, and headlights burst violently around the corner of the bluff and reached across the shine of water and picked out, casual and instantaneous, a canoe with a couple in it

It was there, starkly white, for only a split instant, and then the road swung, the curtain came down She found it hard to believe that it had been there at all, she even felt a little knife prick of terror that it could have been there—so silent, so secret, so swallowed in the black, as unseen and unfelt and unsuspected as a crocodile at a jungle ford

The heat lightning flared again like the flare of distant explosions or the light of burning towns Instinctively, out of a habit long outgrown, and even while her eyes remained fixed on the place where the canoe had been, she waited for the sound of the blast, but nothing came, she found herself waiting almost ridiculously, with held breath, and that was the time when the lion chose to roar again

That challenge, coming immediately after the shock of seeing the silent and somehow stealthy canoe, brought a thought that stopped her pulse What if he should be loose? She felt the adrenalin pump into her blood as she might have felt an electric shock Her heart pounded and her breath came fast through her open mouth What if he should be loose?

What if, in these Indiana woods by this quiet river where all of them lived and worked for a future full of casual expectation, far from the jungles and the velds where lions could be ex-

pected and where darkness was full of danger, what if here too fear prowled on quiet pads and made its snarling noise in the night? This fraternity house where they lived amicably was ringed with dark water and darker woods where the threat lay in wait. This elevated balcony which she could flood with light at the flip of a finger, this fellowship of youth and study and common experience and common hopes, this common belief in the future, were as friable as walls of cane, as vulnerable as grass huts, and she did not need the things that had happened that evening, or the sight of Clark Richards tiny light flicking and darting back toward her along the riverbank, to know that what she had lived through for six years was not over and would perhaps never be over for any of them, that in their hearts they were alone, terrified, and at bay, each with his ears attuned to some roar across the woods, some ripple of the water, some whisper of a footstep in the dark.

1948

ANTON CHEKHOV



The Lady with the Dog

It was said that a new person had appeared on the sea front a lady with a little dog. Dmitri Dmitritch Gurov, who had by then been a fortnight at Yalta and so was fairly at home there, had begun to take an interest in new arrivals. Sitting in Verney's pavilion, he saw, walking on the sea-front, a fair haired young lady of medium height, wearing a *beret*, a white Pomeranian dog was running behind her.

And afterwards he met her in the public gardens and in the square several times a day. She was walking alone, always wearing the same *beret*, and always with the same white dog. No one knew who she was, and every one called her simply the lady with the dog.

If she is here alone without a husband or friends, it wouldn't be amiss to make her acquaintance, Gurov reflected.

He was under forty, but he had a daughter already twelve years old, and two sons at school. He had been married young, when he was a student in his second year, and by now his wife seemed half as old again as he. She was a tall, erect woman with dark eyebrows, staid and dignified, and, as she said of herself, intellectual. She read a great deal, used phonetic spelling, called her husband, not Dmitri, but DIMITRI, and he secretly considered her unintelligent, narrow, inelegant. He was afraid of her, and did not like to be at home. He had begun being unfaithful to her long ago—had been unfaithful to her often, and, probably on that account, almost always spoke ill of women, and when they were talked about in his presence, used to call them the lower race.

It seemed to him that he had been so schooled by bitter experience that he might call them what he liked, and yet he could

not get on for two days together without "the lower race. In the society of men he was bored and not himself, with them he was cold and uncommunicative, but when he was in the company of women he felt free, and knew what to say to them and how to behave, and he was at ease with them even when he was silent. In his appearance, in his character, in his whole nature, there was something attractive and elusive which allured women and disposed them in his favour, he knew that, and some force seemed to draw him, too, to them.

Experience often repeated, truly bitter experience, had taught him long ago that with decent people—especially Moscow people—always slow to move and irresolute—every intimacy, which at first so agreeably diversifies life and appears a light and charming adventure, inevitably grows into a regular problem of extreme intricacy, and in the long run the situation becomes unbearable. But at every fresh meeting with an interesting woman this experience seemed to slip out of his memory, and he was eager for life, and everything seemed simple and amusing.

One evening he was dining in the gardens, and the lady in the *beret* came up slowly to take the next table. Her expression, her gait, her dress, and the way she did her hair told him that she was a lady, that she was married, that she was in Yalta for the first time and alone, and that she was dull there. The stories told of the immorality in such places as Yalta are to a great extent untrue, he despised them, and knew that such stories were for the most part made up by persons who would themselves have been glad to sin if they had been able, but when the lady sat down at the next table three paces from him, he remembered these tales of easy conquests, of trips to the mountains, and the tempting thought of a swift, fleeting love affair, a romance with an unknown woman, whose name he did not know, suddenly took possession of him.

He beckoned coaxingly to the Pomeranian, and when the dog came up to him he shook his finger at it. The Pomeranian growled. Gurov shook his finger at it again.

The lady looked at him and at once dropped her eyes.

'He doesn't bite,' she said, and blushed.

'May I give him a bone?' he asked, and when she nodded he asked courteously, 'Have you been long in Yalta?'

Five days

And I have already dragged out a fortnight here

There was a brief silence

Time goes fast, and yet it is so dull here! she said, not looking at him

That's only the fashion to say it is dull here. A provincial will live in Belyov or Zhidra and not be dull, and when he comes here it's 'Oh, the dullness! Oh, the dust!' One would think he came from Grenada

She laughed. Then both continued eating in silence, like strangers, but after dinner they walked side by side, and there sprang up between them the light jesting conversation of people who are free and satisfied, to whom it does not matter where they go or what they talk about. They walked and talked of the strange light on the sea—the water was of a soft warm lilac hue, and there was a golden streak from the moon upon it. They talked of how sultry it was after a hot day. Gurov told her that he came from Moscow, that he had taken his degree in Arts, but had a post in a bank, that he had trained as an opera singer, but had given it up, that he owned two houses in Moscow. And from her he learnt that she had grown up in Petersburg, but had lived in S— since her marriage two years before, that she was staying another month in Yalta, and that her husband, who needed a holiday too, might perhaps come and fetch her. She was not sure whether her husband had a post in a Crown Department or under the Provincial Council—and was amused by her own ignorance. And Gurov learnt, too, that she was called Anna Sergeevna.

Afterwards he thought about her in his room at the hotel—thought she would certainly meet him next day, it would be sure to happen. As he got into bed he thought how lately she had been a girl at school, doing lessons like his own daughter—he recalled the diffidence, the angularity, that was still manifest in her laugh and her manner of talking with a stranger. This must have been the first time in her life she had been alone in surroundings in which she was followed, looked at, and spoken to merely

from a secret motive which she could hardly fail to guess. He recalled her slender, delicate neck, her lovely grey eyes.

There's something pathetic about her, anyway, he thought, and fell asleep.

II

A week had passed since they had made acquaintance. It was a holiday. It was sultry indoors, while in the street the wind whirled the dust round and round, and blew people's hats off. It was a thirsty day, and Gurov often went into the pavilion, and pressed Anna Sergeyevna to have syrup and water or an ice. One did not know what to do with oneself.

In the evening when the wind had dropped a little, they went out on the groyne to see the steamer come in. There were a great many people walking about the harbour, they had gathered to welcome some one, bringing bouquets. And two peculiarities of a well-dressed Yalta crowd were very conspicuous: the elderly ladies were dressed like young ones, and there were great numbers of generals.

Owing to the roughness of the sea the steamer arrived late, after the sun had set, and it was a long time turning about before it reached the groyne. Anna Sergeyevna looked through her lorgnette at the steamer and the passengers as though looking for acquaintances, and when she turned to Gurov her eyes were shining. She talked a great deal and asked disconnected questions, forgetting next moment what she had asked, then she dropped her lorgnette in the crush.

The festive crowd began to disperse, it was too dark to see people's faces. The wind had completely dropped, but Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna still stood as though waiting to see some one else come from the steamer. Anna Sergeyevna was silent now, and sniffed the flowers without looking at Gurov.

The weather is better this evening, he said. Where shall we go now? Shall we drive somewhere?

She made no answer.

Then he looked at her intently, and all at once put his arm round her and kissed her on the lips, and breathed in the mois-

ture and the fragrance of the flowers, and he immediately looked round him, anxiously wondering whether any one had seen them.

Let us go to your hotel, he said softly. And both walked quickly.

The room was close and smelt of the scent she had bought at the Japanese shop. Gurov looked at her and thought: What different people one meets in the world! From the past he preserved memories of careless, good-natured women, who loved cheerfully and were grateful to him for the happiness he gave them, however brief it might be; and of women like his wife who loved without any genuine feeling, with superfluous phrases, affectedly, hysterically, with an expression that suggested that it was not love nor passion, but something more significant, and of two or three others, very beautiful, cold women, on whose faces he had caught a glimpse of a rapacious expression—an obstinate desire to snatch from life more than it could give, and these were capricious, unreflecting, domineering, unintelligent women not in their first youth, and when Gurov grew cold to them their beauty excited his hatred, and the lace on their linen seemed to him like scales.

But in this case there was still the diffidence, the angularity of inexperienced youth, an awkward feeling, and there was a sense of consternation as though some one had suddenly knocked at the door. The attitude of Anna Sergeyevna—the lady with the dog—to what had happened was somehow peculiar, very grave, as though it were her fall—so it seemed, and it was strange and inappropriate. Her face dropped and faded, and on both sides of it her long hair hung down mournfully, she mused in a dejected attitude like the woman who was a sinner in an old-fashioned picture.

It's wrong, she said. You will be the first to despise me now.

There was a water-melon on the table. Gurov cut himself a slice and began eating it without haste. There followed at least half an hour of silence.

Anna Sergeyevna was touching there was about her the purity of a good, simple woman who had seen little of life. The solitary candle burning on the table threw a faint light on her face, yet it was clear that she was very unhappy.

"How could I despise you?" asked Gurov "You don't know what you are saying

God forgive me, she said, and her eyes filled with tears "It's awful"

"You seem to feel you need to be forgiven"

"Forgiven? No I am a bad, low woman, I despise myself and don't attempt to justify myself It's not my husband but myself I have deceived And not only just now, I have been deceiving myself for a long time My husband may be a good, honest man, but he is a flunkey! I don't know what he does there, what his work is, but I know he is a flunkey! I was twenty when I was married to him I have been tormented by curiosity, I wanted something better There must be a different sort of life I said to myself I wanted to live! To live, to live! I was fired by curiosity you don't understand it, but, I swear to God, I could not control myself, something happened to me I could not be restrained I told my husband I was ill, and came here And here I have been walking about as though I were dazed, like a mad creature,

and now I have become a vulgar, contemptible woman whom any one may despise

Gurov felt bored already, listening to her He was irritated by the naive tone, by this remorse, so unexpected and inopportune, but for the tears in her eyes, he might have thought she was jesting or playing a part

I don't understand, he said softly "What is it you want?"

She hid her face on his breast and pressed close to him

"Believe me believe me, I beseech you" she said "I love a pure, honest life, and sin is loathsome to me I don't know what I am doing Simple people say The Evil One has beguiled me And I may say of myself now that the Evil One has beguiled me

Hush, hush! he muttered

He looked at her fixed, scared eyes kissed her, talked softly and affectionately, and by degrees she was comforted, and her gaiety returned, they both began laughing

Afterwards when they went out there was not a soul on the sea-front The town with its cypresses had quite a deathlike air, but the sea still broke noisily on the shore, a single barge was rocking on the waves, and a lantern was blinking sleepily on it

They found a cab and drove to Oreanda

I found out your surname in the hall just now it was written on the board—Von Diderits, said Gurov Is your husband a German?

No, I believe his grandfather was a German, but he is an Orthodox Russian himself

At Oreanda they sat on a seat not far from the church, looked down at the sea, and were silent Yalta was hardly visible through the morning mist, white clouds stood motionless on the mountain tops The leaves did not stir on the trees, grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow sound of the sea, rising up from below, spoke of the peace, of the eternal sleep awaiting us So it must have sounded when there was no Yalta, no Oreanda here, so it sounds now, and it will sound as indifferently and monotonously when we are all no more And in this constancy, in this complete indifference to the life and death of each of us, there lies hid, perhaps, a pledge of our eternal salvation, of the unceasing movement of life upon earth, of unceasing progress towards perfection Sitting beside a young woman who in the dawn seemed so lovely, soothed and spellbound in these magical surroundings—the sea, mountains, clouds, the open sky—Gurov thought how in reality everything is beautiful in this world when one reflects everything except what we think or do ourselves when we forget our human dignity and the higher aims of our existence

A man walked up to them—probably a keeper—looked at them and walked away And this detail seemed mysterious and beautiful, too They saw a steamer come from Theodosia, with its lights out in the glow of dawn

There is dew on the grass, said Anna Sergeyevna, after a silence

Yes It's time to go home "

They went back to the town

Then they met every day at twelve o'clock on the sea-front, lunched and dined together, went for walks, admired the sea She complained that she slept badly, that her heart throbbed violently, asked the same questions, troubled now by jealousy and now by the fear that he did not respect her sufficiently And often in the square or gardens, when there was no one near them, he suddenly

drew her to him and kissed her passionately. Complete idleness, these kisses in broad daylight while he looked round in dread of some one's seeing them, the heat, the smell of the sea, and the continual passing to and fro before him of idle, well-dressed, well-fed people, made a new man of him, he told Anna Sergeyevna how beautiful she was, how fascinating. He was impatiently passionate, he would not move a step away from her, while she was often pensive and continually urged him to confess that he did not respect her, did not love her in the least, and thought of her as nothing but a common woman. Rather late almost every evening they drove somewhere out of town, to Oreanda or to the waterfall, and the expedition was always a success, the scenery invariably impressed them as grand and beautiful.

They were expecting her husband to come, but a letter came from him, saying that there was something wrong with his eyes, and he entreated his wife to come home as quickly as possible. Anna Sergeyevna made haste to go.

It's a good thing I am going away, she said to Gurov. It's the finger of destiny!

She went by coach and he went with her. They were driving the whole day. When she had got into a compartment of the express, and when the second bell had rung, she said:

Let me look at you once more. . . . look at you once again. That's right.

She did not shed tears, but was so sad that she seemed ill, and her face was quivering.

'I shall remember you. . . . think of you,' she said. 'God be with you, be happy. Don't remember evil against me. We are parting forever—it must be so, for we ought never to have met. Well, God be with you.'

The train moved off rapidly, its lights soon vanished from sight, and a minute later there was no sound of it, as though everything had conspired together to end as quickly as possible that sweet delirium, that madness. Left alone on the platform, and gazing into the dark distance, Gurov listened to the churrup of the grasshoppers and the hum of the telegraph wires, feeling as though he had only just waked up. And he thought, musing, that there had been an-

other episode or adventure in his life, and it, too, was at an end, and nothing was left of it but a memory. He was moved sad, and conscious of a slight remorse. This young woman whom he would never meet again had not been happy with him, he was genuinely warm and affectionate with her, but yet in his manner, his tone, and his caresses there had been a shade of light irony, the coarse condescension of a happy man who was, besides almost twice her age. All the time she had called him kind, exceptional, lofty, obviously he had seemed to her different from what he really was, so he had unintentionally deceived her.

Here at the station was already a scent of autumn, it was a cold evening.

It's time for me to go north, thought Gurov as he left the platform. High time!

III

At home in Moscow everything was in its winter routine, the stoves were heated, and in the morning it was still dark when the children were having breakfast and getting ready for school, and the nurse would light the lamp for a short time. The frosts had begun already. When the first snow has fallen, on the first day of sledge-driving it is pleasant to see the white earth, the white roofs, to draw soft, delicious breath and the season brings back the days of one's youth. The old limes and birches, white with hoar-frost, have a good natured expression, they are nearer to one's heart than cypresses and palms, and near them one doesn't want to be thinking of the sea and the mountains.

Gurov was Moscow born, he arrived in Moscow on a fine frosty day, and when he put on his fur coat and warm gloves and walked along Petrovka, and when on Saturday evening he heard the ringing of the bells, his recent trip and the places he had seen lost all charm for him. Little by little he became absorbed in Moscow life, greedily read three newspapers a day, and declared he did not read the Moscow papers on principle! He already felt a longing to go to restaurants, clubs, dinner parties, anniversary celebrations, and he felt flattered at entertaining distinguished lawyers

and artists, and at playing cards with a professor at the doctors club. He could already eat a whole plateful of salt fish and cabbage.

In another month, he fancied, the image of Anna Sergeyevna would be shrouded in a mist in his memory, and only from time to time would visit him in his dreams with a touching smile as others did. But more than a month passed, real winter had come, and everything was still clear in his memory as though he had parted with Anna Sergeyevna only the day before. And his memories glowed more and more vividly. When in the evening stillness he heard from his study the voices of his children, preparing their lessons, or when he listened to a song or the organ at the restaurant, or the storm howled in the chimney, suddenly everything would rise up in his memory—what had happened on the groyne, and the early morning with the mist on the mountains, and the steamer coming from Theodosia, and the kisses. He would pace a long time about his room, remembering it all and smiling; then his memories passed into dreams, and in his fancy the past was mingled with what was to come. Anna Sergeyevna did not visit him in dreams, but followed him about everywhere like a shadow and haunted him. When he shut his eyes he saw her as though she were living before him, and she seemed to him lovelier, younger, tenderer than she was, and he imagined himself finer than he had been in Yalta. In the evenings she peeped out at him from the bookcase, from the fireplace, from the corner—he heard her breathing, the caressing rustle of her dress. In the street he watched the women, looking for some one like her.

He was tormented by an intense desire to confide his memories to some one. But in his home it was impossible to talk of his love, and he had no one outside, he could not talk to his tenants nor to any one at the bank. And what had he to talk of? Had he been in love, then? Had there been anything beautiful, poetical, or edifying or simply interesting in his relations with Anna Sergeyevna? And there was nothing for him but to talk vaguely of love, of woman, and no one guessed what it meant, only his wife twitched her black eyebrows, and said: "The part of a lady killer does not suit you at all, Dimitri."

One evening, coming out of the doctors club with an official

with whom he had been playing cards, he could not resist saying
'If only you knew what a fascinating woman I made the acquaintance of in Yalta'

The official got into his sledge and was driving away, but turned suddenly and shouted

Dmitri Dmitritch!

'What?'

You were right this evening the sturgeon was a bit too strong!

These words, so ordinary, for some reason moved Gurov to indignation, and struck him as degrading and unclean. What savage manners, what people! What senseless nights, what uninteresting uneventful days! The rage for card playing, the gluttony, the drunkenness, the continual talk always about the same thing. Useless pursuits and conversations always about the same things absorb the better part of one's time, the better part of one's strength, and in the end there is left a life grovelling and curtailed, worthless and trivial, and there is no escaping or getting away from it—just as though one were in a madhouse or a prison.

Gurov did not sleep all night, and was filled with indignation. And he had a headache all next day. And the next night he slept badly, he sat up in bed, thinking or paced up and down his room. He was sick of his children, sick of the bank, he had no desire to go anywhere or to talk of anything.

In the holidays in December he prepared for a journey, and told his wife he was going to Petersburg to do something in the interests of a young friend—and he set off for S—. What for? He did not very well know himself. He wanted to see Anna Sergeyevna and to talk with her—to arrange a meeting, if possible.

He reached S— in the morning, and took the best room at the hotel, in which the floor was covered with grey army cloth, and on the table was an inkstand, grey with dust and adorned with a figure on horseback, with its hat in its hand and its head broken off. The hotel porter gave him the necessary information, Von Diderits lived in a house of his own in Old Gontcharny Street—it was not far from the hotel. He was rich and lived in good style and had his own horses, every one in the town knew him. The porter pronounced the name Dridirits.

Gurov went without haste to Old Gontcharny Street and found

the house Just opposite the house stretched a long grey fence adorned with nails

One would run away from a fence like that, thought Gurov, looking from the fence to the windows of the house and back again

He considered to day was a holiday, and the husband would probably be at home And in any case it would be tactless to go into the house and upset her If he were to send her a note it might fall into her husband's hands, and then it might ruin everything The best thing was to trust to chance And he kept walking up and down the street by the fence, waiting for the chance He saw a beggar go in at the gate and dogs fly at him, then an hour later he heard a piano, and the sounds were faint and indistinct Probably it was Anna Sergeyevna playing The front door suddenly opened, and an old woman came out, followed by the familiar white Pomeranian Gurov was on the point of calling to the dog, but his heart began beating violently, and in his excitement he could not remember the dog's name

He walked up and down, and loathed the grey fence more and more, and by now he thought irritably that Anna Sergeyevna had forgotten him, and was perhaps already amusing herself with some one else, and that that was very natural in a young woman who had nothing to look at from morning till night but that con founded fence He went back to his hotel room and sat for a long while on the sofa, not knowing what to do, then he had dinner and a long nap

How stupid and worrying it is! he thought when he woke and looked at the dark windows it was already evening Here I've had a good sleep for some reason What shall I do in the night?

He sat on the bed which was covered by a cheap grey blanket, such as one sees in hospitals, and he taunted himself in his vexation

So much for the lady with the dog so much for the adventure You're in a nice fix

That morning at the station a poster in large letters had caught his eye The Geisha was to be performed for the first time He thought of this and went to the theatre

It's quite possible she may go to the first performance," he thought

The theatre was full. As in all provincial theatres, there was a fog above the chandelier, the gallery was noisy and restless, in the front row the local dandies were standing up before the beginning of the performance, with their hands behind them, in the Governor's box the Governor's daughter, wearing a boa, was sitting in the front seat, while the Governor himself lurked modestly behind the curtain with only his hands visible, the orchestra was a long time tuning up, the stage curtain swayed. All the time the audience were coming in and taking their seats Gurov looked at them eagerly.

Anna Sergeyevna, too, came in. She sat down in the third row, and when Gurov looked at her his heart contracted, and he understood clearly that for him there was in the whole world no creature so near, so precious, and so important to him, she, this little woman, in no way remarkable, lost in a provincial crowd, with a vulgar lorgnette in her hand, filled his whole life now, was his sorrow and his joy, the one happiness that he now desired for himself, and to the sounds of the inferior orchestra, of the wretched provincial violins he thought how lovely she was. He thought and dreamed.

A young man with small side-whiskers, tall and stooping, came in with Anna Sergeyevna and sat down beside her. He bent his head at every step and seemed to be continually bowing. Most likely this was the husband whom at Yalta, in a rush of bitter feeling, she had called a flunkey. And there really was in his long figure, his side whiskers, and the small bald patch on his head, something of the flunkey's obsequiousness, his smile was sugary, and in his buttonhole there was some badge of distinction like the number on a waiter.

During the first interval the husband went away to smoke, she remained alone in her stall. Gurov, who was sitting in the stalls, too, went up to her and said in a trembling voice, with a forced smile:

Good evening.

She glanced at him and turned pale, then glanced again with horror, unable to believe her eyes, and tightly gripped the fan and the lorgnette in her hands, evidently struggling with herself not to faint. Both were silent. She was sitting, he was standing, frightened by her confusion and not venturing to sit down beside her. The

violins and the flute began tuning up. He felt suddenly frightened, it seemed as though all the people in the boxes were looking at them. She got up and went quickly to the door, he followed her, and both walked senselessly along passages, and up and down stairs, and figures in legal, scholastic, and civil service uniforms, all wearing badges, flitted before their eyes. They caught glimpses of ladies, of fur coats hanging on pegs, the draughts blew on them, bringing a smell of stale tobacco. And Gurov, whose heart was beating violently, thought

'Oh, heavens! Why are these people here and this orchestra!

And at that instant he recalled how when he had seen Anna Sergeyevna off at the station he had thought that everything was over and they would never meet again. But how far they were still from the end!

On the narrow, gloomy staircase over which was written 'To the Amphitheatre', she stopped.

'How you have frightened me!' she said, breathing hard, still pale and overwhelmed. 'Oh, how you have frightened me! I am half dead. Why have you come? Why?'

'But do understand, Anna, do understand,' he said hastily in a low voice. 'I entreat you to understand.'

She looked at him with dread, with entreaty, with love, she looked at him intently, to keep his features more distinctly in her memory.

'I am so unhappy,' she went on, not heeding him. 'I have thought of nothing but you all the time, I live only in the thought of you. And I wanted to forget, to forget you, but why, oh, why, have you come?'

On the landing above them two schoolboys were smoking and looking down, but that was nothing to Gurov, he drew Anna Sergeyevna to him, and began kissing her face, her cheeks, and her hands.

'What are you doing, what are you doing!' she cried in horror, pushing him away. 'We are mad. Go away to-day, go away at once. I beseech you by all that is sacred, I implore you. There are people coming this way!'

Some one was coming up the stairs.

"You must go away," Anna Sergeyevna went on in a whisper. Do you hear, Dmitri Dmitritch? I will come and see you in Moscow. I have never been happy, I am miserable now, and I never, never shall be happy, never! Don't make me suffer still more! I swear I'll come to Moscow. But now let us part. My precious, good, dear one, we must part!

She pressed his hand and began rapidly going downstairs, looking round at him, and from her eyes he could see that she really was unhappy. Gurov stood for a little while, listened, then, when all sound had died away, he found his coat and left the theatre.

IV

And Anna Sergeyevna began coming to see him in Moscow. Once in two or three months she left S—, telling her husband that she was going to consult a doctor about an internal complaint—and her husband believed her, and did not believe her. In Moscow she stayed at the Slaviansky Bazaar hotel, and at once sent a man in a red cap to Gurov. Gurov went to see her, and no one in Moscow knew of it.

Once he was going to see her in this way on a winter morning (the messenger had come the evening before when he was out). With him walked his daughter, whom he wanted to take to school. It was on the way. Snow was falling in big wet flakes.

It's three degrees above freezing point, and yet it is snowing, said Gurov to his daughter. The thaw is only on the surface of the earth, there is quite a different temperature at a greater height in the atmosphere.

'And why are there no thunderstorms in the winter, father?'

He explained that, too. He talked, thinking all the while that he was going to see *her*, and no living soul knew of it, and probably never would know. He had two lives: one, open, seen and known by all who cared to know, full of relative truth and of relative falsehood—exactly like the lives of his friends and acquaintances, and another life running its course in secret. And through some strange, perhaps accidental, conjunction of circumstances, everything that was essential, of interest and of value to him, everything in which he was sincere and did not deceive himself, everything

that made the kernel of his life, was hidden from other people, and all that was false in him, the sheath in which he hid himself to conceal the truth—such, for instance, as his work in the bank, his discussions at the club, his 'lower race, his presence with his wife at anniversary festivities—all that was open. And he judged of others by himself, not believing in what he saw, and always believing that every man had his real, most interesting life under the cover of secrecy and under the cover of night. All personal life rested on secrecy, and possibly it was partly on that account that civilised man was so nervously anxious that personal privacy should be respected.

After leaving his daughter at school, Gurov went on to the Slaviansky Bazaar. He took off his fur coat below, went upstairs, and softly knocked at the door. Anna Sergeyevna, wearing his favourite grey dress, exhausted by the journey and the suspense, had been expecting him since the evening before. She was pale, she looked at him, did not smile, and he had hardly come in when she fell on his breast. Their kiss was slow and prolonged, as though they had not met for two years.

'Well, how are you getting on there?' he asked. 'What news?'

'Wait, I'll tell you directly. I can't talk.'

She could not speak; she was crying. She turned away from him, and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

'Let her have her cry out. I'll sit down and wait,' he thought, and he sat down in an arm-chair.

Then he rang and asked for tea to be brought him, and while he drank his tea she remained standing at the window with her back to him. She was crying from emotion from the miserable consciousness that their life was so hard for them; they could only meet in secret, hiding themselves from people, like thieves! Was not their life shattered?

'Come, do stop!' he said.

It was evident to him that this love of theirs would not soon be over, that he could not see the end of it. Anna Sergeyevna grew more and more attached to him. She adored him, and it was unthinkable to say to her that it was bound to have an end some day, besides, she would not have believed it!

JAMES JOYCE



A Painful Case

Mr James Duffy lived in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen and because he found all the other suburbs of Dublin mean, modern and pretentious. He lived in an old sombre house and from his windows he could look into the disused distillery or upwards along the shallow river on which Dublin is built. The lofty walls of his uncarpeted room were free from pictures. He had himself bought every article of furniture in the room: a black iron bedstead, an iron wash-stand, four cane chairs, a clothes rack, a coal scuttle, a fender and irons and a square table on which lay a double desk. A bookcase had been made in an alcove by means of shelves of white wood. The bed was clothed with white bedclothes and a black and scarlet rug covered the foot. A little hand mirror hung above the wash stand and during the day a white shaded lamp stood as the sole ornament of the mantelpiece. The books on the white wooden shelves were arranged from below upwards according to bulk. A complete Wordsworth stood at one end of the lowest shelf and a copy of the *Maynooth Catechism*, sewn into the cloth cover of a notebook, stood at one end of the top shelf. Writing materials were always on the desk. In the desk lay a manuscript translation of Hauptmann's *Michael Kramer*, the stage directions of which were written in purple ink, and a little sheaf of papers held together by a brass pin. In these sheets a sentence was inscribed from time to time and, in an ironical moment, the headline of an advertisement for *Bile Beans* had been pasted on to the first sheet. On lifting the lid of the desk a faint fragrance escaped—the fragrance of new cedarwood pencils or of a bottle

of gum or of an overripe apple which might have been left there and forgotten

Mr Duffy abhorred anything which betokened physical or mental disorder A mediaeval doctor would have called him saturnine His face which carried the entire tale of his years was of the brown tint of Dublin streets On his long and rather large head grew dry black hair and a tawny moustache did not quite cover an unamiable mouth His cheekbones also gave his face a harsh character, but there was no harshness in the eyes which looking at the world from under their tawny eyebrows gave the impression of a man ever alert to greet a redeeming instinct in others but often disappointed He lived at a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts with doubtful side glances He had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense He never gave alms to beggars and walked firmly, carrying a stout hazel

He had been for many years cashier of a private bank in Baggot Street Every morning he came in from Chapelizod by tram At midday he went to Dan Burke's and took his lunch—a bottle of lager beer and a small trayful of arrow-root biscuits At four o'clock he was set free He dined in an eating-house in George's Street where he felt himself safe from the society of Dublin's gilded youth and where there was a certain plain honesty in the bill of fare His evenings were spent either before his landlady's piano or roaming about the outskirts of the city His liking for Mozart's music brought him sometimes to an opera or a concert these were the only dissipations of his life

He had neither companions nor friends, church nor creed He lived his spiritual life without any communion with others, visiting his relatives at Christmas and escorting them to the cemetery when they died He performed these two social duties for old dignity's sake but conceded nothing further to the conventions which regulate the civic life He allowed himself to think that in certain circumstances he would rob his bank but, as these circumstances never arose, his life rolled out evenly—an adventureless tale

One evening he found himself sitting beside two ladies in the

Rotunda The house, thinly peopled and silent, gave distressing prophecy of failure The lady who sat next him looked round at the deserted house once or twice and then said

'What a pity there is such a poor house to night! It's so hard on people to have to sing to empty benches

He took the remark as an invitation to talk He was surprised that she seemed so little awkward While they talked he tried to fix her permanently in his memory When he learned that the young girl beside her was her daughter he judged her to be a year or so younger than himself Her face, which must have been handsome had remained intelligent It was an oval face with strongly marked features The eyes were very dark blue and steady Their gaze began with a defiant note but was confused by what seemed a deliberate swoon of the pupil into the iris, revealing for an instant a temperament of great sensibility The pupil reasserted itself quickly, this half-disclosed nature fell again under the reign of prudence, and her astrakhan jacket, moulding a bosom of a certain fullness, struck the note of defiance more definitely

He met her again a few weeks afterwards at a concert in Earlsfort Terrace and seized the moments when her daughter's attention was diverted to become intimate She alluded once or twice to her husband but her tone was not such as to make the allusion a warning Her name was Mrs Sinico Her husband's great-grandfather had come from Leghorn Her husband was captain of a mercantile boat plying between Dublin and Holland, and they had one child

Meeting her a third time by accident he found courage to make an appointment She came This was the first of many meetings, they met always in the evening and chose the most quiet quarters for their walks together Mr Duffy, however, had a distaste for underhand ways and, finding that they were compelled to meet stealthily, he forced her to ask him to her house Captain Sinico encouraged his visits, thinking that his daughter's hand was in question He had dismissed his wife so sincerely from his gallery of pleasures that he did not suspect that anyone else would take an interest in her As the husband was often away and the daughter out giving music lessons Mr Duffy had many opportunities of enjoying the lady's society Neither he nor she had had any such ad-

venture before and neither was conscious of any incongruity Little by little he entangled his thoughts with hers He lent her books, provided her with ideas, shared his intellectual life with her She listened to all

Sometimes in return for his theories she gave out some fact of her own life With almost maternal solicitude she urged him to let his nature open to the full she became his confessor He told her that for some time he had assisted at the meetings of an Irish Socialist Party where he had felt himself a unique figure amidst a score of sober workmen in a garret lit by an inefficient oil-lamp When the party had divided into three sections, each under its own leader and in its own garret, he had discontinued his attendances The workmen's discussions, he said, were too timorous, the interest they took in the question of wages was inordinate He felt that they were hard featured realists and that they resented an exactitude which was the produce of a leisure not within their reach No social revolution, he told her, would be likely to strike Dublin for some centuries

She asked him why did he not write out his thoughts For what, he asked her, with careful scorn To compete with phrasemongers, incapable of thinking consecutively for sixty seconds? To submit himself to the criticisms of an obtuse middle class which entrusted its morality to policemen and its fine arts to impresarios?

He went often to her little cottage outside Dublin, often they spent their evenings alone Little by little, as their thoughts entangled, they spoke of subjects less remote Her companionship was like a warm soil about an exotic Many times she allowed the dark to fall upon them, refraining from lighting the lamp The dark discreet room, their isolation, the music that still vibrated in their ears united them This union exalted him wore away the rough edges of his character, emotionalised his mental life Sometimes he caught himself listening to the sound of his own voice He thought that in her eyes he would ascend to an angelical stature, and, as he attached the fervent nature of his companion more and more closely to him, he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own, insisting on the soul's incurable loneliness We cannot give ourselves, it said we are our own The end of these discourses was that one night during which she had

shown every sign of unusual excitement, Mrs Simco caught up his hand passionately and pressed it to her cheek

Mr Duffy was very much surprised Her interpretation of his words disillusioned him He did not visit her for a week, then he wrote to her asking her to meet him As he did not wish their last interview to be troubled by the influence of their ruined confessional they met in a little cake shop near the Parkgate It was cold autumn weather but in spite of the cold they wandered up and down the roads of the Park for nearly three hours They agreed to break off their intercourse every bond, he said, is a bond to sorrow When they came out of the Park they walked in silence towards the tram, but here she began to tremble so violently that, fearing another collapse on her part, he bade her good bye quickly and left her A few days later he received a parcel containing his books and music

Four years passed Mr Duffy returned to his even way of life His room still bore witness of the orderliness of his mind Some new pieces of music encumbered the music stand in the lower room and on his shelves stood two volumes by Nietzsche *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *The Gay Science* He wrote seldom in the sheaf of papers which lay in his desk One of his sentences written two months after his last interview with Mrs Simco, read Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse He kept away from concerts lest he should meet her His father died, the junior partner of the bank retired And still every morning he went into the city by tram and every evening walked home from the city after having dined moderately in George's Street and read the evening paper for dessert

One evening as he was about to put a morsel of corned beef and cabbage into his mouth his hand stopped His eyes fixed themselves on a paragraph in the evening paper which he had propped against the water-carafe He replaced the morsel of food on his plate and read the paragraph attentively Then he drank a glass of water, pushed his plate to one side, doubled the paper down before him between his elbows and read the paragraph over and over again The cabbage began to deposit a cold white grease on

his plate The girl came over to him to ask was his dinner not properly cooked He said it was very good and ate a few mouthfuls of it with difficulty Then he paid his bill and went out

He walked along quickly through the November twilight, his stout hazel stick striking the ground regularly, the fringe of the buff *Mail* peeping out of a side pocket of his tight reefer overcoat On the lonely road which leads from the Parkgate to Chapelizod he slackened his pace His stick struck the ground less emphatically and his breath, issuing irregularly, almost with a sighing sound, condensed in the wintry air When he reached his house he went up at once to his bedroom and, taking the paper from his pocket read the paragraph again by the failing light of the window He read it not aloud, but moving his lips as a priest does when he reads the prayers *Secreto* This was the paragraph

DEATH OF A LADY AT SYDNEY PARADE

A Painful Case

To day at the City of Dublin Hospital the Deputy Coroner (in the absence of Mr Leverett) held an inquest on the body of Miss Emily Simco, aged forty three years who was killed at Sydney Parade Station yesterday evening The evidence showed that the deceased lady while attempting to cross the line was knocked down by the engine of the ten o'clock slow train from Kingstown thereby sustaining injuries of the head and right side which led to her death

James Lennon, driver of the engine stated that he had been in the employment of the railway company for fifteen years On hearing the guard's whistle he set the train in motion and a second or two afterwards brought it to rest in response to loud cries The train was going slowly

P Dunne railway porter, stated that as the train was about to start he observed a woman attempting to cross the lines He ran towards her and shouted, but before he could reach her, she was caught by the buffer of the engine and fell to the ground

A Juror You saw the lady fall?

Witness Yes"

Police Sergeant Croly deposed that when he arrived he found the deceased lying on the platform apparently dead He had the body taken to the waiting room pending the arrival of the ambulance

Constable 57 corroborated

Dr Halpin assistant house surgeon of the City of Dublin Hospital stated that the deceased had two lower ribs fractured and had sustained severe contusions of the right shoulder. The right side of the head had been injured in the fall. The injuries were not sufficient to have caused death in a normal person. Death in his opinion had been probably due to shock and sudden failure of the heart's action.

Mr H B Patterson Finlay on behalf of the railway company expressed his deep regret at the accident. The company had always taken every precaution to prevent people crossing the lines except by the bridges both by placing notices in every station and by the use of patent spring gates at level crossings. The deceased had been in the habit of crossing the lines late at night from platform to platform and in view of certain other circumstances of the case, he did not think the railway officials were to blame.

Captain Sinico of Leoville Sydney Parade, husband of the deceased also gave evidence. He stated that the deceased was his wife. He was not in Dublin at the time of the accident as he had arrived only that morning from Rotterdam. They had been married for twenty two years and had lived happily until about two years ago when his wife began to be rather intemperate in her habits.

Miss Mary Sinico said that of late her mother had been in the habit of going out at night to buy spirits. She witness had often tried to reason with her mother and had induced her to join a League. She was not at home until an hour after the accident.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence and exonerated Lennon from all blame.

The Deputy Coroner said it was a most painful case and expressed great sympathy with Captain Sinico and his daughter. He urged on the railway company to take strong measures to prevent the possibility of similar accidents in the future. No blame attached to anyone.

Mr Duffy raised his eyes from the paper and gazed out of his window on the cheerless evening landscape. The river lay quiet beside the empty distillery and from time to time a light appeared in some house on the Lucan road. What an end! The whole narrative of her death revolted him and it revolted him to think that he had ever spoken to her of what he held sacred. The threadbare phrases, the inane expressions of sympathy, the cautious words of a reporter won over to conceal the details of a commonplace vulgar death attacked his stomach. Not merely had she degraded herself, she had degraded him. He saw the squalid tract of her vice, miser-

able and malodorous His souls companion! He thought of the hobbling wretches whom he had seen carrying cans and bottles to be filled by the barman Just God, what an end! Evidently she had been unfit to live, without any strength of purpose an easy prey to habits, one of the wrecks on which civilization has been reared But that she could have sunk so low! Was it possible he had deceived himself so utterly about her? He remembered her outburst of that night and interpreted it in a harsher sense than he had ever done He had no difficulty now in approving of the course he had taken

As the light failed and his memory began to wander he thought her hand touched his The shock which had first attacked his stomach was now attacking his nerves He put on his overcoat and hat quickly and went out The cold air met him on the threshold, it crept into the sleeves of his coat When he came to the public-house at Chapelizod Bridge he went in and ordered a hot punch

The proprietor served him obsequiously but did not venture to talk There were five or six working men in the shop discussing the value of a gentleman's estate in County Kildare They drank at intervals from their huge pint tumblers and smoked, spitting often on the floor and sometimes dragging the sawdust over their spits with their heavy boots Mr Duffy sat on his stool and gazed at them, without seeing or hearing them After a while they went out and he called for another punch He sat a long time over it The shop was very quiet The proprietor sprawled on the counter reading the *Herald* and yawning Now and again a tram was heard swishing along the lonely road outside

As he sat there, living over his life with her and evoking alternately the two images in which he now conceived her, he realized that she was dead that she had ceased to exist, that she had become a memory He began to feel ill at ease He asked himself what else could he have done He could not have carried on a comedy of deception with her, he could not have lived with her openly He had done what seemed to him best How was he to blame? Now that she was gone he understood how lonely her life must have been, sitting night after night alone in that room His life would be lonely too until he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory—if anyone remembered him

It was after nine o'clock when he left the shop. The night was cold and gloomy. He entered the Park by the first gate and walked along under the gaunt trees. He walked through the bleak alleys where they had walked four years before. She seemed to be near him in the darkness. At moments he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his. He stood still to listen. Why had he withheld life from her? Why had he sentenced her to death? He felt his moral nature falling to pieces.

When he gained the crest of the Magazine Hill he halted and looked along the river towards Dublin, the lights of which burned redly and hospitably in the cold night. He looked down the slope and, at the base, in the shadow of the wall of the Park, he saw some human figures lying. Those venal and furtive loves filled him with despair. He gnawed the rectitude of his life, he felt that he had been outcast from life's feast. One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness; he had sentenced her to ignominy, a death of shame. He knew that the prostrate creatures down by the wall were watching him and wished him gone. No one wanted him, he was outcast from life's feast. He turned his eyes to the grey gleaming river, winding along towards Dublin. Beyond the river he saw a goods train winding out of Kingsbridge Station, like a worm with a fiery head winding through the darkness, obstinately and laboriously. It passed slowly out of sight but still he heard in his ears the laborious drone of the engine reiterating the syllables of her name.

He turned back the way he had come, the rhythm of the engine pounding in his ears. He began to doubt the reality of what memory told him. He halted under a tree and allowed the rhythm to die away. He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear. He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing; the night was perfectly silent. He listened again perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone.

THOMAS MANN



Tobias Mindernickel

One of the streets running steeply up from the docks to the middle town was named Grey's Road. At about the middle of it, on the right, stood Number 47, a narrow, dingy-looking building no different from its neighbours. On the ground floor was a chandler's shop where you could buy overshoes and castor oil. Crossing the entry along a courtyard full of cats and mounting the mean and shabby, musty-smelling stair, you arrived at the upper storeys. In the first, on the left, lived a cabinet-maker, on the right a midwife. In the second, on the left a cobbler, on the right a lady who began to sing loudly whenever she heard steps on the stair. In the third, on the left, nobody, but on the right a man named Mindernickel—and Tobias to boot. There was a story about this man, I tell it, because it is both puzzling and sinister, to an extraordinary degree.

Mindernickel's exterior was odd, striking, and provoking to laughter. When he took a walk, his meagre form moving up the street supported by a cane, he would be dressed in black from head to heels. He wore a shabby old-fashioned top hat with a curved brim, a frock coat shining with age, and equally shabby trousers, fringed round the bottoms and so short that you could see the elastic sides to his boots. True, these garments were all most carefully brushed. His scrawny neck seemed longer because it rose out of a low turn-down collar. His hair had gone grey and he wore it brushed down smooth on the temples. His wide hat-brim shaded a smooth-shaven, sallow face with sunken cheeks, red-rimmed eyes which were usually directed at the floor, and two deep, fretful furrows running from the nose to the drooping corners of the mouth.

Mindernickel seldom left his house—and this for a very good reason. For whenever he appeared in the street a mob of children would collect and sally behind him, laughing, mocking, singing—

Ho ho, Tobias! they would cry, tugging at his coat-tails, while people came to their doors to laugh. He made no defence, glancing timidly round with shoulders drawn up and head stuck out, he continued on his way, like a man hurrying through a driving rain without an umbrella. Even while they were laughing in his face he would bow politely and humbly to people as he passed. Further on, when the children had stopped behind and he was not known, and scarcely noted, his manner did not change. He still hurried on, still stooped, as though a thousand mocking eyes were on him. If it chanced that he lifted his timid, irresolute gaze from the ground, you would see that, strangely enough, he was not able to fix it steadily upon anyone or anything. It may sound strange, but there seemed to be missing in him the natural superiority with which the normal, perceptive individual looks out upon the phenomenal world. He seemed to measure himself against each phenomenon, and find himself wanting, his gaze shifted and fell, it grovelled before men and things.

What was the matter with this man, who was always alone and unhappy even beyond the common lot? His clothing belonged to the middle class, a certain slow gesture he had, of his hand across his chin, betrayed that he was not of the common people among whom he lived. How had fate been playing with him? God only knows. His face looked as though life had hit him between the eyes, with a scornful laugh. On the other hand, perhaps it was a question of no cruel blow but simply that he was not up to it. The painful shrinking and humility expressed in his whole figure did indeed suggest that nature had denied him the measure of strength, equilibrium, and backbone which a man requires if he is to live with his head erect.

When he had taken a turn up into the town and come back to Grey's Road, where the children welcomed him with lusty bawlings, he went into the house and up the stuffy stair into his own bare room. It had but one piece of furniture worthy the name, a solid Empire chest of drawers with brass handles, a thing of dignity and beauty. The view from the window was hopelessly cut

off by the heavy side wall of the next house, a flower-pot full of earth stood on the ledge, but there was nothing growing in it Tobias Mindernickel went up to it sometimes and smelled at the earth Next to this room was a dark little bedchamber Tobias on coming in would lay hat and stick on the table, sit down on the dusty green-covered sofa, prop his chin with his hand, and stare at the floor with his eyebrows raised He seemed to have nothing else to do

As for Tobias Mindernickels character, it is hard to judge of that Some favourable light seems to be cast by the following episode One day this strange man left his house and was pounced upon by a troop of children who followed him with laughter and jeers One of them, a lad of ten years, tripped over another child's foot and fell so heavily to the pavement that blood burst from his nose and ran from his forehead He lay there and wept Tobias turned at once, went up to the lad, and began to console him in a mild and quavering voice You poor child, said he, 'have you hurt yourself? You are bleeding—look how the blood is running down from his forehead Yes, yes, you do look miserable, you weep because it hurts you so I pity you Of course, you did it yourself, but I will tie my handkerchief round your head There, there! Now pull yourself together and get up And actually with the words he bound his own handkerchief round the bruise and helped the lad to his feet Then he went away But he looked a different man He held himself erect and stepped out firmly, drawing longer breaths under his narrow coat His eyes looked larger and brighter, he looked squarely at people and things, while an expression of joy so strong as to be almost painful tightened the corners of his mouth

After this for a while there was less tendency to jeer at him among the denizens of Grey's Road But they forgot his astonishing behaviour with the lapse of time, and once more the cruel cries resounded from dozens of lusty throats behind the bent and infirm man Ho, ho, Tobias!

One sunny morning at eleven o'clock Mindernickel left the house and betook himself through the town to the Lerchenberg, a long ridge which constitutes the afternoon walk of good society

Today the spring weather was so fine that even in the forenoon there were some carriages as well as pedestrians moving about. On the main road, under a tree, stood a man with a young hound on a leash, exhibiting it for sale. It was a muscular little animal about four months old, with black ears and black rings round its eyes.

Tobias at a distance of ten paces noticed this, he stood still, rubbed his chin with his hand, and considered the man, and the hound alertly wagging its tail. He went forward, circling three times round the tree, with the crook of his stick pressed against his lips. Then he stepped up to the man, and keeping his eye fixed on the dog, he said in a low, hurried tone: 'What are you asking for the dog?'

Ten marks, answered the man.

Tobias kept still a moment, then he said with some hesitation: 'Ten marks?'

'Yes,' said the man.

Tobias drew a black leather purse from his pocket, took out a note for five marks, one three-mark and one two-mark piece, and quickly handed them to the man. Then he seized the leash, and two or three people who had been watching the bargain laughed to see him as he gave a quick, frightened look about him and, with his shoulders stooped, dragged away the whimpering and protesting beast. It struggled the whole of the way, bracing its forefeet and looking up pathetically in its new master's face. But Tobias pulled, in silence, with energy and succeeded in getting through the town.

An outcry arose among the urchins of Grey's Road when Tobias appeared with the dog. He lifted it in his arms, while they danced round, pulling at his coat and jeering, carried it up the stair and bore it into his own room, where he set it on the floor, still whimpering. Stooping over and patting it with kindly condescension he told it:

There, there, little man, you need not be afraid of me, that is quite unnecessary.

He took a plate of cooked meat and potatoes out of a drawer and tossed the dog a part of it, whereat it ceased to whine and ate the food with loud relish, wagging its tail.

And I will call you Esau," said Tobias. Do you understand? That will be easy for you to remember. Pointing to the floor in front of him he said, in a tone of command

Esau!

And the dog, probably in the hope of getting more to eat, did come up to him. Tobias clapped him gently on the flank and said

That's right, good doggy, good doggy!

He stepped back a few paces, pointed to the floor again, and commanded

Esau!

And the dog sprang to him quite blithely, wagging its tail, and licked its master's boots.

Tobias repeated the performance with unflagging zest, some twelve or fourteen times. Then the dog got tired, it wanted to rest and digest its meal. It lay down in the sagacious and charming attitude of a hunting dog, with both long, slender forelegs stretched before it, close together.

Once more, said Tobias. Esau!

But Esau turned his head aside and stopped where he was.

'Esau!' Tobias's voice was raised, his tone more dictatorial still. You've got to come, even if you are tired.

But Esau laid his head on his paws and came not at all.

"Listen to me," said Tobias, and his voice was now low and threatening, "you'd best obey or you will find out what I do when I am angry."

But the dog hardly moved his tail.

Then Mindernickel was seized by a mad and extravagant fit of anger. He clutched his black stick, lifted up Esau by the nape of the neck, and in a frenzy of rage he beat the yelping animal, repeating over and over in a horrible, hissing voice

What, you do not obey me? You dare to disobey me?

At last he flung the stick from him, set down the crying animal, and with his hands upon his back began to pace the room, his breast heaving, and flinging upon Esau an occasional proud and angry look. When this had gone on for some time, he stopped in front of the dog as it lay on its back, moving its fore-paws imploringly. He crossed his arms on his chest and spoke with a fright-

ful hardness and coldness of look and tone—like Napoleon, when he stood before a company that had lost its standard in battle

May I ask you what you think of your conduct?

And the dog delighted at this condescension, crawled closer, nestled against its master's leg, and looked up at him bright-eyed

For a while Tobias gazed at the humble creature with silent contempt. Then as the touching warmth of Esau's body communicated itself to his leg he lifted Esau up.

Well, I will have pity on you, he said. But when the good beast essayed to lick his face his voice suddenly broke with melancholy emotion. He pressed the dog passionately to his breast, his eyes filling with tears, unable to go on. Chokingly he said:

You see, you are my only my only He put Esau to bed, with great care, on the sofa, supported his own chin with his hand, and gazed at him with mild eyes, speechlessly.

Tobias Mindernickel left his room now even less often than before, he had no wish to show himself with Esau in public. He gave his whole time to the dog, from morning to night, feeding him, washing his eyes, teaching him commands, scolding him, and talking to him as though he were human. Esau, alas, did not always behave to his master's satisfaction. When he lay beside Tobias on the sofa, dull with lack of air and exercise, and gazed at him with soft melancholy eyes, Tobias was pleased. He sat content and quiet, tenderly stroking Esau's back as he said:

Poor fellow, how sadly you look at me! Yes, yes, life is sad, that you will learn before you are much older.

But sometimes Esau was wild, beside himself with the urge to exercise his hunting instincts, he would dash about the room, worry a slipper, leap on the chairs, or roll over and over with sheer excess of spirits. Then Tobias followed his motions from afar with a helpless, disapproving, wandering air and a hateful, peevish smile. At last he would brusquely call Esau to him and say:

That's enough now, stop dashing about like that—there is no reason for such high spirits.

Once it even happened that Esau got out of the room and

bounced down the stairs to the street, where he at once began to chase a cat, to eat dung in the road, and jump up at the children frantic with joy. But when the distressed Tobias appeared with his wry face, half the street roared with laughter to see him, and it was painful to behold the dog bounding away in the other direction from his master. That day Tobias in his anger beat him for a long time.

One day when he had had the dog for some weeks Tobias took a loaf of bread out of the chest of drawers and began stooping over to cut off little pieces with his big bone handled knife and let them drop on the floor for Esau to eat. The dog was frantic with hunger and playfulness, it jumped up at the bread, and the long handled knife in the clumsy hands of Tobias ran into its right shoulder blade. It fell bleeding to the ground.

In great alarm Tobias flung bread and knife aside and bent over the injured animal. Then the expression of his face changed actually a gleam of relief and happiness passed over it. With the greatest care he lifted the wounded animal to the sofa—and then with what inexhaustible care and devotion he began to tend the invalid. He did not stir all day from its side, he took it to sleep on his own bed, he washed and bandaged, stroked and caressed and consoled it with unwearied solicitude.

Does it hurt so much? he asked. Yes, you are suffering a good deal, my poor friend. But we must be quiet, we must try to bear it. And the look on his face was one of gentle and melancholy happiness.

But as Esau got better and the wound healed, so the spirits of Tobias sank again. He paid no more attention to the wound, confining his sympathy to words and caresses. But it had gone on well. Esau's constitution was sound, he began to move about once more. One day after he had finished off a whole plate of milk and white bread he seemed quite right again, jumped down from the sofa to rush about the room, barking joyously, with all his former lack of restraint. He tugged at the bed covers, chased a potato round the room, and rolled over and over in his excitement.

Tobias stood by the flower-pot in the window. His arms stuck

out long and lean from the ragged sleeves and he mechanically twisted the hair that hung down from his temples His figure stood out black and uncanny against the grey wall of the next building His face was pale and drawn with suffering and he followed Esau's pranks unmoving with a sidelong, jealous, wicked look But suddenly he pulled himself together, approached the dog, and made it stop jumping about, he took it slowly in his arms

Now poor creature, he began, in a lachrymose tone—but Esau was not minded to be pitied his spuits were too high He gave a brisk snap at the hand which would have stroked him, he escaped from the arms to the floor, where he jumped mockingly aside and ran off, with a joyous bark

That which now happened was so shocking, so inconceivable that I simply cannot tell it in any detail Tobias Mindernickel stood leaning a little forward, his arms hanging down, his lips were compressed, the balls of his eyes vibrated uncannily in their sockets Suddenly with a sort of frantic leap he seized the animal, a large bright object gleamed in his hand—and then he flung Esau to the ground with a cut which ran from the right shoulder deep into the chest The dog made no sound, he simply fell on his side bleeding and quivering

The next minute he was on the sofa with Tobias kneeling before him, pressing a cloth on the wound and stammering

My poor brute, my poor dog! How sad everything is! How sad it is for both of us! You suffer—yes, yes, I know You lie there so pathetic—but I am with you, I will console you—here is my best handkerchief—

But Esau lay there and rattled in his throat His clouded, questioning eyes were directed upon his master, with a look of complaining innocence, and incomprehension—and then he stretched out his legs a little and died

But Tobias stood there motionless, as he was He had laid his face against Esau's body and he wept bitter tears

KATHERINE MANSFIELD



Revelations

From eight o'clock in the morning until about half past eleven Monica Tyrell suffered from her nerves, and suffered so terribly that these hours were—agonizing, simply. It was not as though she could control them. Perhaps if I were ten years younger she would say. For now that she was thirty-three she had a queer little way of referring to her age on all occasions, of looking at her friends with grave, childish eyes and saying: 'Yes, I remember how twenty years ago—' or of drawing Ralph's attention to the girls—real girls—with lovely youthful arms and throats and swift hesitating movements who sat near them in restaurants. Perhaps if I were ten years younger.

'Why don't you get Marie to sit outside your door and absolutely forbid anybody to come near your room until you ring your bell?

Oh, if it were as simple as that! She threw her little gloves down and pressed her eyelids with her fingers in the way he knew so well. But in the first place I'd be so conscious of Marie sitting there, Marie shaking her finger at Rudd and Mrs. Moon, Marie as a kind of cross between a wardress and a nurse for mental cases! And then, there's the post. One can't get over the fact that the post comes, and once it has come, who—who—could wait until eleven for the letters?

His eyes grew bright, he quickly, lightly clasped her. *My letters, darling?*

Perhaps—she drawled, softly, and she drew her hand over his reddish hair, smiling too, but thinking: 'Heavens! What a stupid thing to say!'

But this morning she had been awakened by one great slam of the front door Bang The flat shook What was it? She jerked up in bed, clutching the eiderdown, her heart beat What could it be? Then she heard voices in the passage Marie knocked, and, as the door opened, with a sharp tearing rip out flew the blind and the curtains, stiffening, flapping, jerking The tassel of the blind knocked—knocked against the window Eh h, *voilà!* cried Marie setting down the tray and running *C'est le vent, Madame C'est un vent insupportable*

Up rolled the blind, the window went up with a jerk, a whitey greyish light filled the room Monica caught a glumpse of a huge pale sky and a cloud like a torn shirt dragging across before she hid her eyes with her sleeve

Marie! the curtains! Quick, the curtains! Monica fell back into the bed and then Ring ting a ping ping, ring-ting a ping ping It was the telephone The limit of her suffering was reached, she grew quite calm Go and see, Marie

It is Monsieur To know if Madame will lunch at Princes at one thirty to day Yes, it was Monsieur himself Yes, he had asked that the message be given to Madame immediately Instead of replying, Monica put her cup down and asked Marie in a small wondering voice what time it was It was half past nine She lay still and half closed her eyes "Tell Monsieur I cannot come," she said gently But as the door shut, anger—anger suddenly gripped her close, close, violent, half strangling her How dared he? How dared Ralph do such a thing when he knew how agonizing her nerves were in the morning! Hadn't she explained and described and even—though lightly, of course, she couldn't say such a thing directly—given him to understand that this was the one unforgivable thing?

And then to choose this frightful windy morning Did he think it was just a fad of hers a little feminine folly to be laughed at and tossed aside? Why, only last night she had said Ah, but you must take me seriously, too And he had replied My darling, you'll not believe me, but I know you infinitely better than you know yourself Every delicate thought and feeling I bow to, I treasure Yes, laugh! I love the way your hip lifts—and he had leaned across the table—I don't care who sees that I adore all of

you I'd be with you on mountain-top and have all the search-lights of the world play upon us

Heavens! Monica almost clutched her head. Was it possible he had really said that? How incredible men were! And she had loved him—how could she have loved a man who talked like that. What had she been doing ever since that dinner party months ago, when he had seen her home and asked if he might come and see again that slow Arabian smile? Oh, what nonsense—what utter nonsense—and yet she remembered at the time a strange deep thrill unlike anything she had ever felt before.

Coal! Coal! Coal! Old iron! Old iron! Old iron! sounded from below. It was all over. Understand her? He had understood nothing. That ringing her up on a windy morning was immensely significant. Would he understand that? She could almost have laughed. You rang me up when the person who understood me simply couldn't have. It was the end. And when Marie said 'Monsieur replied he would be in the vestibule in case Madame changed her mind,' Monica said. No, not verbenas, Marie. Carnations. Two handfuls.

A wild white morning, a tearing, rocking wind. Monica sat down before the mirror. She was pale. The maid combed back her dark hair—combed it all back—and her face was like a mask, with pointed eyelids and dark red lips. As she stared at herself in the blueish shadowy glass she suddenly felt—oh, the strangest, most tremendous excitement filling her slowly, slowly, until she wanted to fling out her arms, to laugh, to scatter everything, to shock Marie, to cry 'I'm free I'm free I'm free as the wind.' And now all this vibrating trembling, exciting, flying world was hers. It was her kingdom. No, no, she belonged to nobody but Life.

'That will do, Marie,' she stammered. My hat, my coat, my bag. And now get me a taxi. Where was she going? Oh, anywhere. She could not stand this silent flat, noiseless Marie, this ghostly, quiet, feminine interior. She must be out, she must be driving quickly—anywhere, anywhere.

The taxi is there, Madame. As she pressed open the big outer doors of the flats the wild wind caught her and floated her across the pavement. Where to? She got in, and smiling radiantly at the

cross, cold-looking driver, she told him to take her to her hairdresser's. What would she have done without her hairdresser? Whenever Monica had nowhere else to go to or nothing on earth to do she drove there. She might just have her hair waved, and by that time she'd have thought out a plan. The cross, cold driver drove at a tremendous pace, and she let herself be hurled from side to side. She wished he would go faster and faster. Oh, to be free of Princes at one thirty, of being the tiny kitten in the swansdown basket, of being the Arabian, and the grave, delighted child and the little wild creature. Never again, she cried aloud, clenching her small fist. But the cab had stopped, and the driver was standing holding the door open for her.

The hairdresser's shop was warm and glittering. It smelled of soap and burnt paper and wallflower brilliantine. There was Madame behind the counter, round, fat, white, her head like a powder puff rolling on a black satin pin cushion. Monica always had the feeling that they loved her in this shop and understood her—the real her—far better than many of her friends did. She was her real self here, and she and Madame had often talked—quite strangely—together. Then there was George who did her hair, young, dark, slender George. She was really fond of him.

But to day—how curious! Madame hardly greeted her. Her face was whiter than ever, but rims of bright red showed round her blue bead eyes, and even the rings on her pudgy fingers did not flash. They were cold, dead, like chips of glass. When she called through the wall telephone to George there was a note in her voice that had never been there before. But Monica would not believe this. No, she refused to. It was just her imagination. She sniffed greedily the warm, scented air, and passed behind the velvet curtain into the small cubicle.

Her hat and jacket were off and hanging from the peg, and still George did not come. This was the first time he had ever not been there to hold the chair for her, to take her hat and hang up her bag, dangling it in his fingers as though it were something he'd never seen before—something fairy. And how quiet the shop was! There was not a sound even from Madame. Only the wind blew, shaking the old house, the wind hooted, and the portraits of Ladies of the Pompadour Period looked down and

smiled, cunning and sly Monica wished she hadn't come Oh, what a mistake to have come! Fatal Fatal Where was George? If he didn't appear the next moment she would go away She took off the white kimono She didn't want to look at herself any more When she opened a big pot of cream on the glass shelf her fingers trembled There was a tugging feeling at her heart as though her happiness—her marvellous happiness—were trying to get free

I'll go I'll not stay She took down her hat But just at that moment steps sounded, and, looking in the mirror, she saw George bowing in the doorway How queerly he smiled! It was the mirror of course She turned round quickly His lips curled back in a sort of grin, and—wasn't he unshaved?—he looked almost green in the face

'Very sorry to have kept you waiting,' he mumbled, sliding, gliding forward

Oh, no, she wasn't going to stay I'm afraid,' she began But he had lighted the gas and laid the tongs across, and was holding out the kimono

"It's a wind," he said Monica submitted She smelled his fresh young fingers pinning the jacket under her chin Yes, there is a wind, said she, sinking back into the chair And silence fell George took out the pins in his expert way Her hair tumbled back, but he didn't hold it as he usually did, as though to feel how fine and soft and heavy it was He didn't say it was in a lovely condition He let it fall, and, taking a brush out of a drawer, he coughed faintly, cleared his throat and said dully Yes, it's a pretty strong one, I should say it was

She had no reply to make The brush fell on her hair Oh, oh, how mournful how mournful! It fell quick and light it fell like leaves and then it fell heavy, tugging like the tugging at her heart That's enough, she cried, shaking herself free

Did I do it too much? asked George He crouched over the tongs I'm sorry There came the smell of burnt paper—the smell she loved—and he swung the hot tongs round in his hand, staring before him "I shouldn't be surprised if it rained He took up a piece of her hair, when—she couldn't bear it any longer—she

stopped him. She looked at him, she saw herself looking at him in the white kimono like a nun. Is there something the matter here? Has something happened? But George gave a half shrug and a grimace. Oh no, Madame. Just a little occurrence. And he took up the piece of hair again. But, oh, she wasn't deceived. That was it. Something awful had happened. The silence—really, the silence seemed to come drifting down like flakes of snow. She shivered. It was cold in the little cubicle, all cold and glittering. The nickel taps and jets and sprays looked somehow almost malignant. The wind rattled the window frame, a piece of iron banged, and the young man went on changing the tongs, crouching over her. Oh, how terrifying Life was, thought Monica. How dreadful. It is the loneliness which is so appalling. We whirl along like leaves, and nobody knows—nobody cares where we fall, in what black river we float away. The tugging feeling seemed to rise into her throat. It ached, ached, she longed to cry. That will do, she whispered. Give me the pins. As he stood beside her, so submissive, so silent, she nearly dropped her arms and sobbed. She couldn't bear any more. Like a wooden man the gay young George still slid, glided, handed her her hat and veil, took the note, and brought back the change. She stuffed it into her bag. Where was she going now?

George took a brush. There is a little powder on your coat," he murmured. He brushed it away. And then suddenly he raised himself and, looking at Monica, gave a strange wave with the brush and said. The truth is, Madame, since you are an old customer—my little daughter died this morning. A first child—and then his white face crumpled like paper and he turned his back on her and began brushing the cotton kimono. Oh, oh, Monica began to cry. She ran out of the shop into the taxi. The driver, looking furious, swung off the seat and slammed the door again. Where to?

Princes, she sobbed. And all the way there she saw nothing but a tiny wax doll with a feather of gold hair, lying meek, its tiny hands and feet crossed. And then just before she came to Princes she saw a flower shop full of white flowers. Oh, what a perfect thought. Lilies of the valley, and white pansies, double

white violets and white velvet ribbon From an unknown
friend From one who understands For a Little Girl
She tapped against the window, but the driver did not hear,
and, anyway, they were at Princes already

1920

WILLIAM FAULKNER



Wash

Sutpen stood above the pallet bed on which the mother and child lay. Between the shrunken planking of the wall the early sunlight fell in long pencil strokes, breaking upon his straddled legs and upon the riding whip in his hand, and lay across the still shape of the mother, who lay looking up at him from still, inscrutable, sullen eyes, the child at her side wrapped in a piece of dingy though clean cloth. Behind them an old negro woman squatted beside the rough hearth where a meager fire smoldered.

Well, Milly, Sutpen said, too bad you're not a mare. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable.

Still the girl on the pallet did not move. She merely continued to look up at him without expression, with a young, sullen, inscrutable face still pale from recent travail. Sutpen moved, bringing into the splintered pencils of sunlight the face of a man of sixty. He said quietly to the squatting negress, Griselda foaled this morning.

Horse or mare? the negress said.

A horse. A damned fine colt. What's this? He indicated the pallet with the hand which held the whip.

That uns a mare, I reckon.

Hah, Sutpen said. A damned fine colt. Going to be the spit and image of old Rob Roy when I rode him North in '61. Do you remember?

'Yes, Marster.'

Hah. He glanced back towards the pallet. None could have said if the girl still watched him or not. Again his whip hand indicated the pallet. Do whatever they need with whatever we've got to do it with. He went out, passing out the crazy doorway and

stepping down into the rank weeds (there yet leaned rusting against the corner of the porch the scythe which Wash had borrowed from him three months ago to cut them with) where his horse waited, where Wash stood holding the reins

When Colonel Sutpen rode away to fight the Yankees, Wash did not go. I'm looking after the Kernels place and niggers, he would tell all who asked him and some who had not asked—a gaunt, malaria ridden man with pale, questioning eyes, who looked about thirty five, though it was known that he had not only a daughter but an eight year old granddaughter as well. This was a lie, as most of them—the few remaining men between eighteen and fifty—to whom he told it, knew, though there were some who believed that he himself really believed it, though even these believed that he had better sense than to put it to the test with Mrs. Sutpen or the Sutpen slaves. Knew better or was just too lazy and shiftless to try it, they said, knowing that his sole connection with the Sutpen plantation lay in the fact that for years now Colonel Sutpen had allowed him to squat in a crazy shack on a slough in the river bottom on the Sutpen place, which Sutpen had built for a fishing lodge in his bachelor days and which had since fallen in dilapidation from disuse, so that now it looked like an aged or sick wild beast crawled terrifically there to drink in the act of dying.

The Sutpen slaves themselves heard of his statement. They laughed. It was not the first time they had laughed at him, calling him white trash behind his back. They began to ask him themselves, in groups, meeting him in the faint road which led up from the slough and the old fish camp, Why ain't you at de war, white man?

Pausing, he would look about the ring of black faces and white eyes and teeth behind which derision lurked. Because I got a daughter and family to keep, he said. Git out of my road, niggers.

Niggers? they repeated, niggers? laughing now. Who him, calling us niggers?

Yes, he said. I ain't got no niggers to look after my folks if I was gone.

Nor nothing else but dat shack down yon dat Cunnel wouldn't let none of us live in

Now he cursed them, sometimes he rushed at them, snatching up a stick from the ground while they scattered before him, yet seeming to surround him still with that black laughing, derisive, evasive, inescapable, leaving him panting and impotent and raging. Once it happened in the very back yard of the big house itself. This was after bitter news had come down from the Tennessee mountains and from Vicksburg and Sherman had passed through the plantation, and most of the negroes had followed him. Almost everything else had gone with the Federal troops, and Mrs. Sutpen had sent word to Wash that he could have the scuppernongs ripening in the arbor in the back yard. This time it was a house servant, one of the few negroes who remained, this time the negress had to retreat up the kitchen steps, where she turned. Stop right dar, white man. Stop right whar you is. You ain't never crossed dese steps whilst Cunnel here, and you ain't ghy do hit now.

This was true. But there was this of a kind of pride he had never tried to enter the big house, even though he believed that if he had, Sutpen would have received him, permitted him. But I ain't going to give no black nigger the chance to tell me I can't go nowhere, he said to himself. I ain't even going to give Kernel the chance to have to cuss a nigger on my account. This, though he and Sutpen had spent more than one afternoon together on those rare Sundays when there would be no company in the house. Perhaps his mind knew that it was because Sutpen had nothing else to do, being a man who could not bear his own company. Yet the fact remained that the two of them would spend whole afternoons in the scuppernong arbor, Sutpen in the hammock and Wash squatting against a post, a pail of cistern water between them, taking drink for drink from the same demijohn. Meanwhile on weekdays he would see the fine figure of the man—they were the same age almost to a day, though neither of them (perhaps because Wash had a grandchild while Sutpen's son was a youth in school) ever thought of himself as being so—on the fine figure of the black stallion, galloping about the plantation. For that moment his heart would be quiet and proud. It would

seem to him that that world in which negroes, whom the Bible told him had been created and cursed by God to be brute and vassal to all men of white skin, were better found and housed and even clothed than he and his, that world in which he sensed always about him mocking echoes of black laughter was but a dream and an illusion, and that the actual world was this one across which his own lonely apotheosis seemed to gallop on the black thoroughbred, thinking how the Book said also that all men were created in the image of God and hence all men made the same image in God's eyes at least, so that he could say, as though speaking of himself, A fine proud man If God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what He would aim to look like'

Sutpen returned in 1865, on the black stallion. He seemed to have aged ten years. His son had been killed in action the same winter in which his wife had died. He returned with his citation for gallantry from the hand of General Lee to a ruined plantation, where for a year now his daughter had subsisted partially on the meager bounty of the man to whom fifteen years ago he had granted permission to live in that tumbledown fishing camp whose very existence he had at the time forgotten. Wash was there to meet him, unchanged, still gaunt, still ageless, with his pale, questioning gaze, his air diffident, a little servile, a little familiar. Well, Kernel, Wash said, they kilt us but they aint whupped us yit, air they?

That was the tenor of their conversation for the next five years. It was inferior whisky which they drank now together from a stoneware jug, and it was not in the scuppernong arbor. It was in the rear of the little store which Sutpen managed to set up on the highroad, a frame shelved room where, with Wash for clerk and porter, he dispensed kerosene and staple foodstuffs and stale gaudy candy and cheap beads and ribbons to negroes or poor whites of Wash's own kind, who came afoot or on grunt mules to haggle tediously for dimes and quarters with a man who at one time could gallop (the black stallion was still alive, the stable in which his jealous get lived was in better repair than the house where the master himself lived) for ten miles across his own fertile land and who had led troops gallantly in battle, until Sutpen in fury would empty the store, close and lock the

doors from the inside Then he and Wash would repair to the rear and the jug But the talk would not be quiet now, as when Sutpen lay in the hammock, delivering an arrogant monologue while Wash squatted guffawing against his post They both sat now, though Sutpen had the single chair while Wash used what ever box or keg was handy, and even this for just a little while, because soon Sutpen would reach that stage of impotent and furious undefeat in which he would rise, swaying and plunging, and declare again that he would take his pistol and the black stallion and ride single-handed into Washington and kill Lincoln, dead now, and Sherman, now a private citizen Kill them! he would shout Shoot them down like the dogs they are—

Sho, Kernel, sho, Kernel, Wash would say, catching Sutpen as he fell Then he would commandeer the first passing wagon or, lacking that, he would walk the mile to the nearest neighbor and borrow one and return and carry Sutpen home He entered the house now He had been doing so for a long time, taking Sutpen home in whatever borrowed wagon might be, talking him into loco motion with cajoling murmurs as though he were a horse, a stallion himself The daughter would meet them and hold open the door without a word He would carry his burden through the once white formal entrance, surmounted by a fanlight imported piece by piece from Europe and with a board now nailed over a missing pane, across a velvet carpet from which all nap was now gone, and up a formal stairs, now but a fading ghost of bare boards between two strips of fading paint, and into the bedroom It would be dusk by now, and he would let his burden sprawl onto the bed and undress it and then he would sit quietly in a chair beside After a time the daughter would come to the door We're all right now, he would tell her Don't you worry none, Miss Judith

Then it would become dark, and after a while he would lie down on the floor beside the bed, though not to sleep, because after a time—sometimes before midnight—the man on the bed would stir and groan and then speak Wash?

Hyer I am, Kernel You go back to sleep We ain't whupped yit, ar we? Me and you kin do hit

Even then he had already seen the ribbon about his granddaughter's waist She was now fifteen, already mature, after the

early way of her kind He knew where the ribbon came from, he had been seeing it and its kind daily for three years, even if she had lied about where she got it, which she did not, at once bold, sullen, and fearful Sho now,' he said Ef Kernel wants to give hit to you, I hope you minded to thank him

His heart was quiet, even when he saw the dress, watching her secret, defiant, frightened face when she told him that Miss Judith, the daughter, had helped her to make it But he was quite grave when he approached Sutpen after they closed the store that afternoon, following the other to the rear

Get the jug, Sutpen directed

Wait, Wash said Not yit for a minute

Neither did Sutpen deny the dress What about it? he said

But Wash met his arrogant stare, he spoke quietly I've knowed you for going on twenty years I ain't never yit denied to do what you told me to do And I'm a man nigh sixty And she ain't nothing but a fifteen year-old gal

Meaning that I'd harm a girl? I, a man as old as you are?

If you was ara other man, I'd say you was as old as me And old or no old, I wouldn't let her keep that dress nor nothing else that come from your hand But you are different

How different? But Wash merely looked at him with his pale, questioning, sober eyes So that's why you are afraid of me?

Now Wash's gaze no longer questioned It was tranquil, serene I ain't afraid Because you air brave It ain't that you were a brave man at one minute or day of your life and got a paper to show hit from General Lee But you air brave, the same as you air alive and breathing That's where hit's different Hit don't need no ticket from nobody to tell me that And I know that whatever you handle or tech, whether hit's a regiment of men or a ignorant gal or just a hound dog, that you will make hit right

Now it was Sutpen who looked away, turning suddenly brusquely Get the jug, he said sharply

Sho, Kernel, Wash said

So on that Sunday dawn two years later, having watched the negro midwife, which he had walked three miles to fetch, enter

the crazy door beyond which his granddaughter lay wailing, his heart was still quiet though concerned. He knew what they had been saying—the negroes in cabins about the land, the white men who loafed all day long about the store, watching quietly the three of them. Sutpen, himself, his granddaughter with her air of brazen and shrinking defiance as her condition became daily more and more obvious, like three actors that came and went upon a stage. I know what they say to one another, he thought. I can almost hear them. *Wash Jones has fixed old Sutpen at last. Hit taken him twenty years, but he has done hit at last.*

It would be dawn after a while, though not yet. From the house, where the lamp shone dim beyond the warped doorframe, his granddaughter's voice came steadily as though run by a clock, while thinking went slowly and terrifically, fumbling, involved somehow with a sound of galloping hooves, until there broke suddenly free in mid-gallop the fine proud figure of the man on the fine proud stallion, galloping, and then that at which thinking fumbled, broke free too and quite clear, not in justification nor even explanation, but as the apotheosis, lonely, explicable beyond all fouling by human touch. He is bigger than all them Yankees that kilt his son and his wife and taken his niggers and ruined his land, bigger than this hyer durn country that he fit for and that has denied him into keeping a little country store, bigger than the denial which hit felt to his lips like the bitter cup in the Book. And how could I have lived this nigh to him for twenty years without being teched and changed by him? Maybe I ain't as big as him and maybe I ain't done none of the galloping. But at least I done been drug along. Me and him kin do hit, if so be he will show me what he aims for me to do.

Then it was dawn. Suddenly he could see the house, and the old negress in the door looking at him. Then he realized that his granddaughter's voice had ceased. It's a girl, the negress said. You can go tell him if you want to. She reentered the house.

A girl, he repeated, "a girl", in astonishment, hearing the galloping hooves, seeing the proud galloping figure emerge again. He seemed to watch it pass, galloping through avatars which marked the accumulation of years, time, to the climax where it galloped beneath a brandished saber and a shot torn flag rushing

down a sky in color like thunderous sulphur, thinking for the first time in his life that perhaps Sutpen was an old man like himself

Gittin a gal, he thought in that astonishment, then he thought with the pleased surprise of a child Yes, sir Be dawg if I ain t lived to be a great grandpaw after all

He entered the house He moved clumsily, on tiptoe as if he no longer lived there, as if the infant which had just drawn breath and cried in light had dispossessed him, be it of his own blood too though it might But even above the pallet he could see little save the blur of his granddaughter's exhausted face Then the negress squatting at the hearth spoke, You better gawn tell him if you going to Hit s daylight now

But this was not necessary He had no more than turned the corner of the porch where the scythe leaned which he had borrowed three months ago to clear away the weeds through which he walked, when Sutpen himself rode up on the old stallion He did not wonder how Sutpen had got the word He took it for granted that this was what had brought the other out at this hour on Sunday morning and he stood while the other dismounted, and he took the reins from Sutpen's hand, an expression on his gaunt face almost imbecile with a kind of weary triumph, saying,

Hit s a gal, Kernel I be dawg if you ain t as old as I am—— until Sutpen passed him and entered the house He stood there with the reins in his hand and heard Sutpen cross the floor to the pallet He heard what Sutpen said, and something seemed to stop dead in him before going on

The sun was now up, the swift sun of Mississippi latitudes, and it seemed to him that he stood beneath a strange sky, in a strange scene, familiar only as things are familiar in dream, like the dreams of falling to one who has never climbed I kain t have heard what I thought I heard, he thought quietly I know I kain t Yet the voice, the familiar voice which had said the words was still speaking, talking now to the old negress about a colt foaled that morning That s why he was up so early, he thought That was hit Hit ain t me and mine Hit ain t even hisn that got him outen bed

Sutpen emerged He descended into the weeds, moving with

that heavy deliberation which would have been haste when he was younger. He had not yet looked full at Wash. He said, Dacey will stay and tend to her. You better—— Then he seemed to see Wash facing him and paused. What? he said.

You said—— To his own ears Wash's voice sounded flat and ducklike, like a deaf man's. You said if she was a mare, you could give her a good stall in the stable.

Well? Sutpen said. His eyes widened and narrowed, almost like a man's fists flexing and shutting, as Wash began to advance towards him, stooping a little. Very astonishment kept Sutpen still for the moment, watching that man whom in twenty years he had no more known to make any motion save at command than he had the horse which he rode. Again his eyes narrowed and widened, without moving he seemed to rear suddenly upright. Stand back, he said suddenly and sharply. Don't you touch me.

I'm going to tech you, Kernel, Wash said in that flat, quiet, almost soft voice, advancing.

Sutpen raised the hand which held the riding whip, the old negress peered around the crazy door with her black gargoyle face of a worn gnome. Stand back, Wash, Sutpen said. Then he struck. The old negress leaped down into the weeds with the agility of a goat and fled. Sutpen slashed Wash again across the face with the whip, striking him to his knees. When Wash rose and advanced once more he held in his hands the scythe which he had borrowed from Sutpen three months ago and which Sutpen would never need again.

When he reentered the house his granddaughter stirred on the pallet bed and called his name fretfully. What was that? she said.

What was what, honey?

That ere racket out there.

Twarn't nothing, he said gently. He knelt and touched her hot forehead clumsily. Do you want ara thing?

I want a sup of water, she said querulously. I been laying here wanting a sup of water a long time, but don't nobody care enough to pay me no mind.

Sho now, he said soothingly He rose stiffly and fetched the dipper of water and raised her head to drink and laid her back and watched her turn to the child with an absolutely stonelike face But a moment later he saw that she was crying quietly Now, now, he said, 'I wouldn't do that Old Dicey says hit's a right fine gal Hit's all right now Hit's all over now Hit ain't no need to cry now

But she continued to cry quietly, almost sullenly, and he rose again and stood uncomfortably above the pallet for a time, thinking as he had thought when his own wife lay so and then his daughter in turn Women Hit's a mystery to me They seem to want em, and yit when they git em they cry about hit Hit's a mystery to me To ara man Then he moved away and drew a chair up to the window and sat down

Through all that long, bright, sunny forenoon he sat at the window, waiting Now and then he rose and tiptoed to the pallet But his granddaughter slept now, her face sullen and calm and weary, the child in the crook of her arm Then he returned to the chair and sat again, waiting, wondering why it took them so long, until he remembered that it was Sunday He was sitting there at mid-afternoon when a half grown white boy came around the corner of the house upon the body and gave a choked cry and looked up and glared for a mesmerized instant at Wash in the window before he turned and fled Then Wash rose and tiptoed again to the pallet

The granddaughter was awake now, wakened perhaps by the boy's cry without hearing it Milly, he said, air you hungry? She didn't answer, turning her face away He built up the fire on the hearth and cooked the food which he had brought home the day before fatback it was, and cold corn pone, he poured water into the stale coffee pot and heated it But she would not eat when he carried the plate to her, so he ate himself, quietly, alone, and left the dishes as they were and returned to the window

Now he seemed to sense, feel, the men who would be gathering with horses and guns—the curious, and the vengeful men of Sutpen's own kind, who had made the company about Sutpen's table in the time when Wash himself had yet to approach nearer to the house than the scuppernong arbor—men

who had also shown the lesser ones how to fight in battle, who maybe also had signed papers from the generals saying that they were among the first of the brave, who had also galloped in the old days arrogant and proud on the fine horses across the fine plantations—symbols also of admiration and hope, instruments too of despair and grief

That was who they would expect him to run from. It seemed to him that he had no more to run from than he had to run to. If he ran, he would merely be fleeing one set of bragging and evil shadows for another just like them since they were all of a kind throughout all the earth which he knew, and he was old too old to flee far even if he were to flee. He could never escape them, no matter how much or how far he ran. A man going on sixty could not run that far. Not far enough to escape beyond the boundaries of earth where such men lived, set the order and the rule of living. It seemed to him that he now saw for the first time, after five years, how it was that Yankees or any other living armies had managed to whip them—the gallant, the proud, the brave, the acknowledged and chosen best among them all to carry courage and honor and pride. Maybe if he had gone to the war with them he would have discovered them sooner. But if he had discovered them sooner, what would he have done with his life since? How could he have borne to remember for five years what his life had been before?

Now it was getting toward sunset. The child had been crying, when he went to the pallet he saw his granddaughter nursing it, her face still bemused, sullen, inscrutable. 'An you hungry yit?' he said.

I don't want nothing'

You ought to eat

This time she did not answer at all, looking down at the child. He returned to his chair and found that the sun had set. 'Hit kaint be much longer,' he thought. He could feel them quite near now, the curious and the vengeful. He could even seem to hear what they were saying about him, the undercurrent of believing beyond the immediate fury. *Old Wash Jones he come a tumble at last. He thought he had Sutpen, but Sutpen fooled him. He thought he had Kernel where he would have to marry the*

gal or pay up And Kernel refused But I never expected that, Kernel! he cried aloud, catching himself at the sound of his own voice, glancing quickly back to find his granddaughter watching him

Who you talking to now? she said

Hit ain't nothing I was just thinking and talked out before I knowed hit

Her face was becoming indistinct again, again a sullen blur in the twilight I reckon so I reckon you'll have to holler louder than that before he'll hear you, up yonder at that house And I reckon you'll need to do more than holler before you get him down here too

Sho now, he said Don't you worry none But already thinking was going smoothly on You know I never You know how I ain't never expected or asked nothing from a living man but what I expected from you And I never asked that I didn't think hit would need I said, *I don't need to What need has a fellow like Wash Jones to question or doubt the man that General Lee himself says in a handwrote ticket that he was brave?* Brave, he thought Better if nara one of them had never rid back home in 65, thinking *Better if his kind and mine too had never drawn the breath of life on this earth Better that all who remain of us be blasted from the face of earth than that another Wash Jones should see his whole life shredded from him and shrivel away like a dried shuck thrown onto the fire*

He ceased, became still He heard the horses, suddenly and plainly, presently he saw the lantern and the movement of men, the glint of gun barrels, in its moving light Yet he did not stir It was quite dark now, and he listened to the voices and the sounds of underbrush as they surrounded the house The lantern itself came on, its light fell upon the quiet body in the weeds and stopped, the horses tall and shadowy A man descended and stooped in the lantern light, above the body He held a pistol, he rose and faced the house Jones, he said

I'm here, Wash said quietly from the window 'That you, Major?

Come out

Sho, he said quietly I just want to see to my granddaughter "

We'll see to her Come on out "

Sho, Major Just a minute

Show a light Light your lamp

Sho In just a minute They could hear his voice retreat into the house though they could not see him as he went swiftly to the crack in the chimney where he kept the butcher knife the one thing in his slovenly life and house in which he took pride, since it was razor sharp He approached the pallet, his granddaughter's voice

Who is it? Light the lamp, grandpaw

Hit won't need no light, honey Hit won't take but a minute, he said, kneeling, fumbling toward her voice, whispering now Where air you?

Right here, she said fretfully 'Where would I be? What is His hand touched her face What is Grandpaw! Grand

Jones! the sheriff said Come out of there!

In just a minute, Major, he said Now he rose and moved swiftly He knew where in the dark the can of kerosene was, just as he knew that it was full, since it was not two days ago that he had filled it at the store and held it there until he got a ride home with it, since the five gallons were heavy There were still coals on the hearth besides the crazy building itself was like tinder the coals, the hearth, the walls exploding in a single blue glare Against it the waiting men saw him in a wild instant springing toward them with the lifted scythe before the horses reared and whirled They checked the horses and turned them back toward the glare, yet still in wild relief against it the gaunt figure ran toward them with the lifted scythe

Jones! the sheriff shouted, stop! Stop, or I'll shoot Jones! Jones! Yet still the gaunt, furious figure came on against the glare and roar of the flames With the scythe lifted, it bore down upon them, upon the wild glaring eyes of the horses and the swinging glints of gun barrels, without any cry, any sound

J F POWERS



The Forks

That summer when Father Eudex got back from saying Mass at the orphanage in the morning, he would park Monsignor's car, which was long and black and new like a politician's, and sit down in the cool of the porch to read his office. If Monsignor was not already standing in the door, he would immediately appear there, seeing that his car had safely returned, and inquire

Did you have any trouble with her?

Father Eudex knew too well the question meant, Did you mis-treat my car?

No trouble, Monsignor

Good, Monsignor said, with imperfect faith in his curate, who was not a car owner. For a moment Monsignor stood framed in the screen door, fumbling his watch fob as for a full-length portrait, and then he was suddenly not there.

Monsignor, Father Eudex said, rising nervously, 'I've got a chance to pick up a car.

At the door Monsignor slid into his frame again. His face expressed what was for him intense interest.

Yes? Go on.

I don't want to have to use yours every morning."

It's all right.

And there are other times. Father Eudex decided not to be maudlin and mention sick calls, nor be entirely honest and admit he was tired of busses and bumming rides from parishioners. And now I've got a chance to get one—cheap.

Monsignor, smiling, came alert at *cheap*.

New?

No, I wouldn't say it's new.

Monsignor was openly suspicious now What kind?

It's a Ford

And not new?

Not new, Monsignor—but in good condition It was owned by a retired farmer and had good care

Monsignor sniffed He *knew* cars V Eight, Father?

No, Father Eudex confessed It's a Model A

Monsignor chuckled as though this were indeed the damnedest thing he had ever heard

But in very good condition, Monsignor

You said that

Yes And I could take it apart if anything went wrong My uncle had one '

No doubt Monsignor uttered a laugh at Father Eudex's rural origins Then he delivered the final word, long delayed out of amusement It wouldn't be prudent, Father After all this isn't a country parish You know the class of people we get here

Monsignor put on his Panama hat Then, apparently mistaking the obstinacy in his curate's face for plain ignorance, he shed a little more light People watch a priest, Father *Damnante quod non intelligunt* It would never do You'll have to watch your tendencies

Monsignor's eyes tripped and fell hard on the morning paper lying on the swing where he had finished it

Another flattering piece about that crazy fellow There's a man who might have gone places if it weren't for his mouth! A bishop doesn't have to get mixed up in all that stuff!

Monsignor, as Father Eudex knew, meant unions, strikes, race riots—all that stuff

A parishioner was saying to me only yesterday it's getting so you can't tell the Catholics from the Communists, with the priests as bad as any Yes and this fellow is the worst He reminds me of that bishop a few years back—at least he called himself a bishop, a Protestant—that was advocating companionate marriages It's not that bad, maybe, but if you listened to some of them you'd think that Catholicity and capitalism were incompatible!

"The Holy Father——"

The Holy Fathers in Europe, Father Mr Memmers lives in the parish I'm his priest What can I tell him?

'Is it Mr Memmers of the First National, Monsignor?

It is, Father And there's damned little cheer I can give a man like Memmers Catholics, priests, and laity alike—yes, and princes of the Church, all talking atheistic communism!

This was the substance of their conversation, always the deadly routine in which Father Eudex played straight man Each time it happened he seemed to participate, and though he should have known better he justified his participation by hoping that it would not happen again, or in quite the same way But it did, it always did, the same way, and Monsignor, for all his alarums, had nothing to say really and meant one thing only, the thing he never said—that he dearly wanted to be, and was not, a bishop

Father Eudex could imagine just what kind of bishop Monsignor would be His reign would be a wise one, excessively so His mind was made up on everything excessively so He would know how to avoid the snares set in the path of the just man avoid them, too, in good taste and good conscience He would not be trapped as so many good shepherds before him had been trapped, poor souls—caught in fair seeming dilemmas of justice that were best left alone, like the first apple It grieved him, he said, to think of those great hearts broken in silence and solitude It was the worst kind of exile, alas! But just give him the chance and he would know what to do, what to say, and more important, what not to do, not to say—neither yea nor nay for him He had not gone to Rome for nothing For him the dark forest of decisions would not exist, for him thanks to hours spent in prayer and meditation the forest would vanish as dry grass before fire, his fire He knew the mask of evil already—birth control, indecent movies, salacious books—and would call these things by their right names and dare to deal with them for what they were, these new occasions for the old sins of the cities of the plains

But in the meantime—oh, to have a particle of the faith that God had in humanity! Dear, trusting God forever trying them beyond their feeble powers, ordering terrible tests fatal trials by nonsense (the crazy bishop) And keeping Monsignor steadily

warming up on the side lines, ready to rush in, primed for the day that would perhaps never dawn

At one time, so the talk went, there had been reason to think that Monsignor was headed for a bishopric. Now it was too late, Monsignor's intercessors were all dead, the cupboard was bare, he knew it at heart, and it galled him to see another man this *crazy* man given the opportunity, and making such a mess of it.

Father Eudex searched for and found a little salt for Monsignor's wound. The words going around he'll be the next archbishop, he said.

I won't believe it, Monsignor countered hoarsely. He glanced at the newspaper on the swing and renewed his horror. If that fellow's right, Father, I'm —his voice cracked at the idea— *'wrong!'*

Father Eudex waited until Monsignor had started down the steps to the car before he said, It could be.

I'll be back for lunch, Father. I'm taking her for a little spin.

Monsignor stopped in admiration a few feet from the car—her. He was as helpless before her beauty as a boy with a birthday bicycle. He could not leave her alone. He had her out every morning and afternoon and evening. He was indiscriminate about picking people up for a ride in her. He kept her on a special diet—only the best of gas and oil and grease, with daily rubdowns. He would run her only on the smoothest roads and at so many miles an hour. That was to have stopped at the first five hundred, but only now, nearing the thousand mark, was he able to bring himself to increase her speed, and it seemed to hurt him more than it did her.

Now he was walking around behind her to inspect the tires. Apparently O.K. He gave the left rear fender an amorous chuck and eased into the front seat. Then they drove off the car and he, to see the world, to explore each other further on the honeymoon.

Father Eudex watched the car slide into the traffic, and waited, on edge. The corner cop, fulfilling Father Eudex's fears, blew his whistle and waved his arms up in all four directions, bringing traffic to a standstill. Monsignor pulled expertly out of line and drove down Clover Boulevard in a one-car parade, all others

stalled respectfully. The cop, as Monsignor passed, tipped his cap, showing a bald head. Monsignor, in the circumstances, could not acknowledge him, though he knew the man well—a parish ioner. He was occupied with keeping his countenance kindly, grim, and exalted, that the cop's faith remain whole for it was evidently inconceivable to him that Monsignor should ever venture abroad unless to bear the Holy Viaticum, always racing with death.

Father Eudex, eyes baleful but following the progress of the big black car, saw a hand dart out of the driver's window in a wave. Monsignor would combine a lot of business with pleasure that morning, creating what he called good will for the Church—all morning in the driver's seat toasting passers by with a wave that was better than a blessing. How he loved waving to people!

Father Eudex overcame his inclination to sit and stew about things by going down the steps to meet the mailman. He got the usual handful for the Monsignor—advertisements and amazing offers, the unfailing crop of chaff from dealers in church goods, organs, collection schemes, insurance, and sacramental wines. There were two envelopes addressed to Father Eudex, one a mimeographed plea from a missionary society which he might or might not acknowledge with a contribution, depending upon what he thought of the cause—if it was really lost enough to justify a levy on his poverty—and the other a cheque for a hundred dollars.

The cheque came in an eggshell envelope with no explanation except a tiny card, Compliments of the Rival Tractor Company, but even that was needless. All over town clergymen had known for days that the cheques were on the way again. Some, rejoicing, could hardly wait. Father Eudex, however, was one of those who could.

With the passing of hard times and the coming of the fruitful war years, the Rival Company, which was a great one for public relations, had found the best solution to the excess profits problem to be giving Ministers and even rabbis shared in the annual jack pot, but Rival Employees were largely Catholic and it was the cheques to the priests that paid off. Again, some thought it

was a wonderful idea, and others thought that Rival, plagued by strikes and justly so, had put their alms to work

There was another eggshell envelope, Father Eudex saw, among the letters for Monsignor, and knew his cheque would be for two hundred, the premium for pastors

Father Eudex left Monsignor's mail on the porch table by his cigars. His own he stuck in his back pocket, wanting to forget it, and went down the steps into the yard. Walking back and forth on the shady side of the rectory where the lilies of the valley grew and reading his office, he gradually drifted into the back yard, lured by a noise. He came upon Whalen, the janitor, pounding pegs into the ground.

Father Eudex closed the breviary on a finger. What's it all about, Joe?

Joe Whalen snatched a piece of paper from his shirt and handed it to Father Eudex. He gave it to me this morning.

He—it was the word for Monsignor among them. A docile pronoun only, and yet when it meant the Monsignor it said, and concealed, nameless things.

The paper was a plan for a garden drawn up by the Monsignor in his fine hand. It called for a huge fleur-de-lis bounded by smaller crosses—and these Maltese—a fountain, a sundial and a cloister walk running from the rectory to the garage. Later there would be birdhouses and a ten foot wall of thick grey stones, acting as a moat against the eyes of the world. The whole scheme struck Father Eudex as expensive and, in this country, Presbyterian.

When Monsignor drew the plan, however, he must have been in his medieval mood. A spouting whale jostled with Neptune in the choppy waters of the fountain. North was indicated in the legend by a winged cherub huffing and puffing.

Father Eudex held the plan up against the sun to see the watermark. The stationery was new to him, heavy, simulated parchment, with the Church of the Holy Redeemer and Monsignor's name embossed, three initials, W F X, William Francis Xavier. With all those initials the man could pass for a radio station, a chancery wit had observed, or if his last name had not been Sweeney, Father Eudex added now, for high Anglican.

Father Eudex returned the plan to Whalen, feeling sorry for him and to an extent guilty before him—if only because he was a priest like Monsignor (now turned architect) whose dream of a monastery garden included the overworked janitor under the head of labour

Father Eudex asked Whalen to bring another shovel Together, almost without words, they worked all morning spading up crosses, leaving the big fleur de lis to the last Father Eudex removed his coat first, then his collar, and finally was down to his undershirt

Toward noon Monsignor rolled into the driveway

He stayed in the car, getting red in the face, recovering from the pleasure of seeing so much accomplished as he slowly recognized his curate in Whalen's helper In a still, appalled voice he called across the lawn, Father, and waited as for a beast that might or might not have sense enough to come

Father Eudex dropped his shovel and went over to the car, shirtless

Monsignor waited a moment before he spoke, as though annoyed by the everlasting necessity, where this person was concerned, to explain Father, he said quietly at last, I wouldn't do any more of that—if I were you Rather, in any event, I wouldn't

All right Monsignor "

To say the least, it's not prudent If necessary—he paused as Whalen came over to dig a cross within earshot—I'll explain later It's time for lunch now

The car, black, beautiful, fierce with chromium, was quiet as Monsignor dismounted, knowing her master Monsignor went around to the rear, felt a tire, and probed a nasty cinder in the tread

Look at that, he said, removing the cinder

Father Eudex thought he saw the car lift a hoof, gaze around, and thank Monsignor with her headlights

Monsignor proceeded at a precise pace to the back door of the rectory There he held the screen open momentarily as if remembering something or reluctant to enter before himself—such was his humility—but then called to Whalen with an intimacy that could never exist between them

Better knock off now, Joe'

Whalen turned in on himself *Joe—is it!*'

Father Eudex removed his clothes from the grass. His hands were all blisters, but in them he found a little absolution. He apologized to Joe for having to take the afternoon off. 'I can't make it, Joe. Something turned up.'

Sure, Father

Father Eudex could hear Joe telling his wife about it that night—yeah, the young one got in wrong with the old one again. Yeah, the old one, he don't believe in it, work, for them.

Father Eudex paused in the kitchen to remember he knew not what. It was in his head, asking to be let in, but he did not place it until he heard Monsignor in the next room complaining about the salad to the housekeeper. It was the voice of dear, dead Aunt Hazel, coming from the summer he was ten. He translated the past into the present. 'I can't come out and play this afternoon, Joe, on account of my monsignor won't let me.'

In the dining room Father Eudex sat down at the table and said grace. He helped himself to a chop, creamed new potatoes, pickled beets, jelly, and bread. He liked jelly. Monsignor passed the butter.

That's supposed to be a *tutti frutti* salad, Monsignor said, grimacing at his. But she used green olives.

Father Eudex said nothing.

I said she used green olives.'

I like green olives all right.

I like green olives, but *not* in *tutti frutti* salad.

Father Eudex replied by eating a green olive, but he knew it could not end there.

Father, Monsignor said in a new tone. How would you like to go away and study for a year?

Don't think I'd care for it, Monsignor. I'm not the type.

You're no canonist, you mean?

That's one thing.

Yes. Well, there are other things it might not hurt you to know. To be quite frank with you, Father, I think you need broadening.

'I guess so,' Father Eudex said thickly.

And still, with your tendencies and with the universities honeycombed with Communists No, that would never do I think I meant seasoning, not broadening

Oh '

No offence?

No offence

Who would have thought a little thing like an olive could lead to all this, Father Eudex mused—who but himself, that is, for his association with Monsignor had shown him that anything could lead to everything Monsignor was a master at making points Nothing had changed since the day Father Eudex walked into the rectory saying he was the new assistant Monsignor had evaded Father Eudex's hand in greeting, and a few days later, after he began to get the range, he delivered a lecture on the whole subject of handshaking It was Middle West to shake hands, or South West, or West in any case, and it was not done where he came from, and—why had he ever come from where he came from? Not to be reduced to shaking hands, you could bet! Handshaking was worse than foot washing and unlike that pious practice there was nothing to support it And from handshaking Monsignor might go into a general discussion of Father Eudex's failings He used the open forum method but he was the only speaker and there was never time enough for questions from the audience Monsignor seized his examples at random from life He saw Father Eudex coming out of his bedroom in pyjama bottoms only and so told him about the dressing gown, its purpose, some thing of its history He advised Father Eudex to barber his arm-pits, for it was being done all over now He let Father Eudex see his bottle of cologne, Steeple, special for clergymen, and said he should not be afraid of it He suggested that Father Eudex shave his face oftener, too He loaned him his Rogers Peet catalogue, which had sketches of clerical blades togged out in the latest, and prayed that he would stop going around looking like a rabbinical student

He found Father Eudex reading *The Catholic Worker* one day and had not trusted him since Father Eudex's conception of the priesthood was evangelical in the worst sense, barbaric, gross, foreign to the mind of the Church, which was one of two terms

he used as sticks to beat him with The other was taste The air of the rectory was often heavy with The Mind of the Church and Taste

Another thing Father Eudex could not conduct a civil conversation Monsignor doubted that Father Eudex could even think to himself with anything like agreement Certainly any discussion with Father Eudex ended inevitably in argument or sighing Sighing! Why didn't people talk up if they had anything to say? No, they'd rather sigh! Father, don't ever, ever sigh at me again!

Finally, Monsignor did not like Father Eudex's table manners This came to a head one night when Monsignor, seeing his curate's plate empty and all the silverware at his place unused except for a single knife, fork, and spoon, exploded altogether, saying it had been on his mind for weeks, and then descending into the vernacular he declared that Father Eudex did not know the forks—now perhaps he could understand that! Meals, unless Monsignor had guests or other things to struggle with, were always occasions of instruction for Father Eudex, and sometimes of chastisement

And now he knew the worst—if Monsignor was thinking of recommending him for a year of study, in a Sulpician seminary probably, to learn the forks So this was what it meant to be a priest *Come, follow me Going forth teach ye all nations Heal the sick, raise the dead cleanse the lepers, cast out devils* Teach the class of people we get here? Teach Mr Memmers? Teach Communists? Teach Monsignors? And where were the poor? The lepers of old? The lepers were in their colonies with nuns to nurse them The poor were in their holes and would not come out Mr Memmers was in his bank, without cheer The Communists were in their universities, awaiting a sign And he was at table with Monsignor, and it was enough for the disciple to be as his master, but the housekeeper had used green olives

Monsignor inquired, Did you get your cheque today?

Father Eudex looked up, considered I got a cheque, he said

From the Rival people, I mean?

Yes

"Good Well, I think you might apply it on the car you're wanting A decent car That's a worthy cause Monsignor noticed that

he was not taking it well 'Not that I mean to dictate what you shall do with your little windfall, Father It's just that I don't like to see you mortifying yourself with a Model A—and disgracing the Church

'Yes, Father Eudex said, suffering

Yes I dare say you don't see the danger, just as you didn't a while ago when I found you making a spectacle of yourself with Whalen You just don't see the danger because you just don't think Not to dwell on it, but I seem to remember some overshoes

The overshoes! Monsignor referred to them as to the Fall Last winter Father Eudex had given his overshoes to a freezing picket It had got back to Monsignor and—good Lord, a man could have his sympathies, but he had no right clad in the cloth to endanger the prestige of the Church by siding in these wretched squabbles Monsignor said he hated to think of all the evil done by people doing good! Had Father Eudex ever heard of the Albigenian heresy or didn't the seminary teach that any more?

Father Eudex declined dessert It was strawberry mousse

Delicious, Monsignor said I think I'll let her stay

At that moment Father Eudex decided that he had nothing to lose He placed his knife next to his fork on the plate, adjusted them this way and that until they seemed to work a combination in his mind, to spring a lock which in turn enabled him to speak out

Monsignor, he said I think I ought to tell you I don't intend to make use of that money In fact—to show you how my mind works—I have even considered endorsing the cheque to the strikers relief fund

So, Monsignor said calmly—years in the confessional had prepared him for anything

I'll admit I don't know whether I can in justice And even if I could I don't know that I would I don't know why I guess hush money, no matter what you do with it is lousy

Monsignor regarded him with piercing baby blue eyes You'd find it pretty hard to prove, Father, that *any* money *in se* is what you say it is I would quarrel further with the definition 'hush money It seems to me nothing if not rash that you would presume to impugn the motive of the Rival Company in sending

out those cheques You would seem to challenge the whole concept of good works—not that I am ignorant of the misuses to which money can be put Monsignor, changing tack, tucked it all into a sigh Perhaps I'm just a simple soul, and it's enough for me to know personally some of the people in the Rival Company and to know them good people Many of them Catholic A throb had crept into Monsignor's voice He shut it off

I don't mean anything that subtle, Monsignor, Father Eudex said I'm just telling you, as my pastor, what I'm going to do with the cheque Or what I'm not going to do with it I don't know what I'm going to do with it Maybe send it back

Monsignor rose from the table, slightly smiling Very well, Father But there's always the poor

Monsignor took leave of Father Eudex with a laugh Father Eudex felt it was supposed to fool him into thinking that nothing he had said would be used against him It showed, rather, that Monsignor was not winded, that he had broken wild curates before, plenty of them and that he would ride again

Father Eudex sought the shade of the porch He tried to read his office, but was drowsy He got up for a glass of water The saints in Ireland used to stand up to their necks in cold water, but not for drowsiness When he came back to the porch a woman was ringing the doorbell She looked like a customer for rosary beads

Hello, he said

"I'm Mrs Klein, Father, and I was wondering if you could help me out

Father Eudex straightened a porch chair for her Please sit down '

It's a German name, Father Klein was German descent, she said, and added with a silly grin, It ain't what you think, Father

I beg your pardon

'Klein Some think it's a Jew name But they stole it from Klein '

Father Eudex decided to come back to that later "You were wondering if I could help you?"

Yes, Father It's personal

"Is it matter for confession?"

Oh no, Father He had made her blush

Then go ahead

Mrs Klein peered into the honeysuckle vines on either side of the porch for alien ears

No one can hear you, Mrs Klein "

Father—I'm just a poor widow, she said, and continued as though Father Eudex had just slandered the man Klein was awful good to me, Father

I'm sure he was

So good and he went and left me all he had ' She had begun to cry a little

Father Eudex nodded gently She was after something, probably not money, always the best bet—either that or a drunk in the family—but this one was not Irish Perhaps just sympathy

I come to get your advice Father Klein always said, If you got a problem, Freda, see the priest '

Do you need money?

I got more than I can use from the bakery

You have a bakery?

Mrs Klein nodded down the street That's my bakery It was Klein's The Purty

I go by there all the time, Father Eudex said, abandoning himself to her He must stop trying to shape the conversation and let her work it out

Will you give me your advice, Father? He felt that she sensed his indifference and interpreted it as his way of rejecting her She either had no idea how little sense she made or else supreme faith in him, as a priest, to see into her heart

Just what is it you're after, Mrs Klein?

He left me all he had Father, but it's just laying in the bank '

"And you want me to tell you what to do with it?"

Yes, Father '

Father Eudex thought this might be interesting certainly a change He went back in his mind to the seminary and the class in which they had considered the problem of inheritances Do we have any unfulfilled obligations? Are we sure? Are there any impedimenta?

Do you have any dependents, Mrs Klein—any children?"

'One boy, Father I got him running the bakery I pay him good—too much, Father

Is too much a living wage?

Yes, Father He ain't got a family '

A living wage is not too much, Father Eudex handed down, sailing into the encyclical style without knowing it.

Mrs Klein was smiling over having done something good without knowing precisely what it was

How old is your son?

He's thirty six, Father '

'Not married?

No, Father, but he's got him a girl She giggled, and Father Eudex, embarrassed, retied his shoe

But you don't care to make a will and leave this money to your son in the usual way?

I guess I'll have to if I die Mrs Klein was suddenly crushed and haunted, but whether by death or charity, Father Eudex did not know

You don't have to Mrs Klein There are many worthy causes And the worthiest is the cause of the poor My advice to you if I understand your problem, is to give what you have to someone who needs it

Mrs Klein just stared at him

You could even leave it to the archdiocese, he said completing the sentence to himself but I don't recommend it in your case with your tendencies You look like an Indian giver to me

But Mrs Klein had got enough Huh! she said, rising Well! You *are* a funny one!

And then Father Eudex realized that she had come to him for a broker's tip It was in the eyes The hat The dress The shoes If you'd like to speak to the pastor, he said, come back in the evening

You're a nice young man, Mrs Klein said, rather bitter now and bent on getting away from him But I got to say this—you ain't much of a priest And Klein said if I got a problem, see the priest—huh! You ain't much of a priest! What time's your boss come in?²

In the evening, Father Eudex said 'Come any time in the evening

Mrs Klein was already down the steps and making for the street

You might try Mr Memmers at the First National, Father Eudex called, actually trying to help her, but she must have thought it was just some more of his nonsense and did not reply

After Mrs Klein had disappeared Father Eudex went to his room In the hallway upstairs Monsignor's voice, coming from the depths of the clerical nap, halted him

'Who was it?

A woman, Father Eudex said 'A woman seeking good counsel

He waited a moment to be questioned, but Monsignor was not awake enough to see anything wrong with that, and there came only a sigh and a shifting of weight that told Father Eudex he was simply turning over in bed

Father Eudex walked into the bathroom He took the Rival cheque from his pocket He tore it into little squares He let them flutter into the toilet He pulled the chain—hard

He went to his room and stood looking out the window at nothing He could hear the others already giving an account of their stewardship, but could not judge them I bought baseball uniforms for the school I bought the nuns a new washing machine I purchased a Mass kit for a Chinese missionary I bought a set of matched irons Mine helped pay for keeping my mother in a rest home upstate I gave mine to the poor

And you, Father?

D H LAWRENCE



Odour of Chrysanthemums

The small locomotive engine, Number 4, came clanking, stumbling down from Selston with seven full waggons. It appeared round the corner with loud threats of speed, but the colt that it startled from among the gorse, which still flickered indistinctly in the raw afternoon, outdistanced it at a canter. A woman walking up the railway line to Underwood, drew back into the hedge, held her basket aside, and watched the footplate of the engine advancing. The trucks thumped heavily past, one by one with slow inevitable movement, as she stood insignificantly trapped between the jolting black waggons and the hedge, then they curved away towards the coppice where the withered oak leaves dropped noiselessly, while the birds, pulling at the scarlet hips beside the track, made off into the dusk that had already crept into the spinney. In the open, the smoke from the engine sank and cleaved to the rough grass. The fields were dreary and forsaken, and in the marshy strip that led to the whimsey, a reedy pit-pond, the fowls had already abandoned their run among the alders, to roost in the tarred fowl house. The pit bank loomed up beyond the pond, flames like red sores licking its ashy sides, in the afternoon's stagnant light. Just beyond rose the tapering chimneys and the clumsy black headstocks of Brinsley Colliery. The two wheels were spinning fast up against the sky, and the winding engine rapped out its little spasms. The miners were being turned up.

The engine whistled as it came into the wide bay of railway lines beside the colliery, where rows of trucks stood in harbour.

Miners, single, trailing and in groups, passed like shadows diverging home. At the edge of the ribbed level of sidings squat

a low cottage, three steps down from the cinder track. A large bony vine clutched at the house, as if to claw down the tiled roof. Round the bucked yard grew a few wintry primroses. Beyond, the long garden sloped down to a bush covered brook course. There were some twiggy apple trees, winter-crack trees, and ragged cabbages. Beside the path hung dishevelled pink chrysanthemums, like pink cloths hung on bushes. A woman came stooping out of the felt covered fowl house, half-way down the garden. She closed and padlocked the door, then drew herself erect, having brushed some bits from her white apron.

She was a tall woman of imperious mien, handsome, with definite black eyebrows. Her smooth black hair was parted exactly. For a few moments she stood steadily watching the miners as they passed along the railway, then she turned towards the brook course. Her face was calm and set, her mouth was closed with disillusionment. After a moment she called

John! There was no answer. She waited, and then said distinctly

"Where are you?"

Here! replied a child's sulky voice from among the bushes. The woman looked piercingly through the dusk.

Are you at that brook? she asked sternly.

For answer the child showed himself before the raspberry-canecut that rose like whips. He was a small, sturdy boy of five. He stood quite still, defiantly.

Oh! said the mother, conciliated. I thought you were down at that wet brook—and you remember what I told you——

The boy did not move or answer.

Come, come on in, she said more gently, it's getting dark. There's your grandfather's engine coming down the line!

The lad advanced slowly, with resentful, taciturn movement. He was dressed in trousers and waistcoat of cloth that was too thick and hard for the size of the garments. They were evidently cut down from a man's clothes.

As they went slowly towards the house he tore at the ragged wisps of chrysanthemums and dropped the petals in handfuls along the path.

Don't do that—it does look nasty, said his mother. He re

framed, and she, suddenly pitiful, broke off a twig with three or four wan flowers and held them against her face. When mother and son reached the yard her hand hesitated, and instead of laying the flower aside, she pushed it in her apron band. The mother and son stood at the foot of the three steps looking across the bay of lines at the passing home of the miners. The trundle of the small train was imminent. Suddenly the engine loomed past the house and came to a stop opposite the gate.

The engine driver, a short man with round grey beard, leaned out of the cab high above the woman.

Have you got a cup of tea? he said in a cheery, hearty fashion.

It was her father. She went in, saying she would mash. Directly, she returned.

I didn't come to see you on Sunday, began the little grey-bearded man.

I didn't expect you, said his daughter.

The engine driver winced then, reassuming his cheery, airy manner, he said.

Oh, have you heard then? Well, and what do you think—?

I think it is soon enough, she replied.

At her brief censure the little man made an impatient gesture, and said coaxingly, yet with dangerous coldness.

Well, what's a man to do? It's no sort of life for a man of my years, to sit at my own hearth like a stranger. And if I'm going to marry again it may as well be soon as late—what does it matter to anybody?

The woman did not reply, but turned and went into the house. The man in the engine cab stood assertive, till she returned with a cup of tea and a piece of bread and butter on a plate. She went up the steps and stood near the footplate of the hissing engine.

You needn't a brought me bread an butter, said her father.

But a cup of tea—he sipped appreciatively—it's very nice. He sipped for a moment or two, then. I hear as Walter's got another bout on, he said.

When hasn't he? said the woman bitterly.

I heerd tell of him in the Lord Nelson braggin as he was going to spend that b—— afore he went half a sovereign that was.

'When?' asked the woman.

A Sat day night—I know that s true”

Very likely, she laughed bitterly He gives me twenty three shillings’

Aye, it s a nice thing, when a man can do nothing with his money but make a beast of himself! said the grey-whiskered man The woman turned her head away Her father swallowed the last of his tea and handed her the cup

Aye, he sighed, wiping his mouth It s a settler, it is——”

He put his hand on the lever The little engine strained and groaned, and the train rumbled towards the crossing The woman again looked across the metals Darkness was settling over the spaces of the railway and trucks the miners, in grey sombre groups, were still passing home The winding engine pulsed hurriedly, with brief pauses Elizabeth Bates looked at the dreary flow of men then she went indoors Her husband did not come

The kitchen was small and full of firelight, red coals piled glowing up the chimney mouth All the life of the room seemed in the white, warm hearth and the steel fender reflecting the red fire The cloth was laid for tea, cups glinted in the shadows At the back, where the lowest stairs protruded into the room, the boy sat struggling with a knife and a piece of whitewood He was almost hidden in the shadow It was half-past four They had but to await the father s coming to begin tea As the mother watched her son s sullen little struggle with the wood, she saw herself in his silence and pertinacity, she saw the father in her child s indifference to all but himself She seemed to be occupied by her husband He had probably gone past his home, slunk past his own door, to drink before he came in, while his dinner spoiled and wasted in waiting She glanced at the clock then took the potatoes to strain them in the yard The garden and fields beyond the brook were closed in uncertain darkness When she rose with the sauce-pan, leaving the drain steaming into the night behind her, she saw the yellow lamps were lit along the high road that went up the hill away beyond the space of the railway lines and the field

Then again she watched the men trooping home, fewer now and fewer

Indoors the fire was sinking and the room was dark red The

woman put her saucepan on the hob, and set a batter pudding near the mouth of the oven. Then she stood unmoving. Directly, gratefully, came quick young steps to the door. Someone hung on the latch a moment, then a little girl entered and began pulling off her outdoor things, dragging a mass of curls, just ripening from gold to brown, over her eyes with her hat.

Her mother chid her for coming late from school, and said she would have to keep her at home the dark winter days.

Why, mother, it's hardly a bit dark yet. The lamp's not lighted, and my father's not home.

No, he isn't. But it's a quarter to five! Did you see anything of him?

The child became serious. She looked at her mother with large, wistful blue eyes.

No, mother, I've never seen him. Why? Has he come up and gone past, to Old Brinsley? He hasn't, mother, cos I never saw him.

'He'd watch that,' said the mother bitterly, 'he'd take care as you didn't see him. But you may depend upon it, he's seated in the Prince o' Wales. He wouldn't be this late.'

The girl looked at her mother piteously.

Let's have our teas, mother, should we? said she.

The mother called John to table. She opened the door once more and looked out across the darkness of the lanes. All was deserted. She could not hear the winding engines.

Perhaps, she said to herself, he's stopped to get some ripping done.

They sat down to tea. John, at the end of the table near the door, was almost lost in the darkness. Their faces were hidden from each other. The girl crouched against the fender, slowly moving a thick piece of bread before the fire. The lad, his face a dusky mark on the shadow, sat watching her, who was transfigured in the red glow.

I do think it's beautiful to look in the fire, said the child.

Do you? said her mother. Why?

It's so red, and full of little caves—and it feels so nice, and you can fair smell it.

‘It’ll want mending directly,” replied her mother, ‘and then if your father comes he’ll carry on and say there never is a fire when a man comes home sweating from the pit—A public house is always warm enough

There was silence till the boy said complainingly Make haste, our Annie

‘Well, I am doing! I can’t make the fire do it no faster, can I?’

‘She keeps wafflin’ it about so s to make er slow, grumbled the boy

Don’t have such an evil imagination, child, replied the mother

Soon the room was busy in the darkness with the crisp sound of crunching The mother ate very little She drank her tea determinedly, and sat thinking When she rose her anger was evident in the stern unbending of her head She looked at the pudding in the fender, and broke out

It is a scandalous thing as a man can’t even come home to his dinner! If it’s crozzled up to a cinder I don’t see why I should care Past his very door he goes to get to a public-house, and here I sit with his dinner waiting for him—

She went out As she dropped piece after piece of coal on the red fire, the shadows fell on the walls, till the room was almost in total darkness

I canna see, grumbled the invisible John In spite of herself, the mother laughed

You know the way to your mouth, she said She set the dustpan outside the door When she came again like a shadow on the hearth, the lad repeated, complaining sulkily

I canna see

Good gracious! cried the mother irritably, “you’re as bad as your father if it’s a bit dusk!

Nevertheless she took a paper spill from a sheaf on the mantel piece and proceeded to light the lamp that hung from the ceiling in the middle of the room As she reached up, her figure displayed itself just rounding with maternity

Oh, mother—! exclaimed the girl

‘What?’ said the woman, suspended in the act of putting the lamp glass over the flame The copper reflector shone handsomely on her, as she stood with uplifted arm, turning to face her daughter

You've got a flower in your apron! said the child, in a little rapture at this unusual event

Goodness me! exclaimed the woman, relieved One would think the house was afire She replaced the glass and waited a moment before turning up the wick A pale shadow was seen floating vaguely on the floor

Let me smell! said the child, still rapturously, coming forward and putting her face to her mother's waist

Go along, silly! said the mother, turning up the lamp The light revealed their suspense so that the woman felt it almost unbearable Annie was still bending at her waist Irritably, the mother took the flowers out from her apron band

Oh, mother—don't take them out! Annie cried, catching her hand and trying to replace the sprig

Such nonsense! said the mother, turning away The child put the pale chrysanthemums to her lips, murmuring

Don't they smell beautiful!

Her mother gave a short laugh

No, she said, not to me It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he'd got brown chrysanthemums in his button-hole

She looked at the children Their eyes and their parted lips were wondering The mother sat rocking in silence for some time Then she looked at the clock

Twenty minutes to six! In a tone of fine bitter carelessness she continued Eh he'll not come now till they bring him There he'll stick! But he needn't come rolling in here in his pit dirt, for I won't wash him He can lie on the floor— Eh, what a fool I've been, what a fool! And this is what I came here for, to this dirty hole, rats and all, for him to slink past his very door Twice last week—he's begun now—

She silenced herself and rose to clear the table

While for an hour or more the children played, subduedly intent, fertile of imagination, united in fear of the mother's wrath, and in dread of their father's home-coming, Mrs Bates sat in her rocking chair making a singlet of thick cream coloured flannel, which gave a dull wounded sound as she tore off the grey edge

She worked at her sewing with energy, listening to the children, and her anger wearied itself, lay down to rest, opening its eyes from time to time and steadily watching, its ears raised to listen. Sometimes even her anger quailed and shrank, and the mother suspended her sewing, tracing the footsteps that thudded along the sleepers outside, she would lift her head sharply to bid the children hush, but she recovered herself in time, and the footsteps went past the gate, and the children were not flung out of their play world.

But at last Annie sighed, and gave in. She glanced at her waggon of slippers, and loathed the game. She turned plaintively to her mother.

Mother! —but she was inarticulate.

John crept out like a frog from under the sofa. His mother glanced up.

Yes, she said, just look at those shirt-sleeves!

The boy held them out to survey them, saying nothing. Then somebody called in a hoarse voice away down the line, and suspense bristled in the room, till two people had gone by outside, talking.

It is time for bed, said the mother.

My father hasn't come' wailed Annie plaintively. But her mother was primed with courage.

Never mind. They'll bring him when he does come—like a log. She meant there would be no scene. And he may sleep on the floor till he wakes himself. I know he'll not go to work tomorrow after this!

The children had their hands and faces wiped with a flannel. They were very quiet. When they had put on their nightdresses, they said their prayers, the boy mumbling. The mother looked down at them, at the brown silken bush of intertwining curls in the nape of the girl's neck, at the little black head of the lad, and her heart burst with anger at their father who caused all three such distress. The children hid their faces in her skirts for comfort.

When Mrs Bates came down the room was strangely empty, with a tension of expectancy. She took up her sewing and stitched for some time without raising her head. Meantime her anger was tinged with fear.

II

The clock struck eight and she rose suddenly, dropping her sewing on her chair. She went to the stairfoot door, opened it, listening. Then she went out, locking the door behind her.

Something scuffled in the yard, and she started, though she knew it was only the rats with which the place was overrun. The night was very dark. In the great bay of railway lines, bulked with trucks, there was no trace of light, only away back she could see a few yellow lamps at the pit top, and the red smear of the burning pit bank on the night. She hurried along the edge of the track, then, crossing the converging lines, came to the stile by the white gates, whence she emerged on the road. Then the fear which had led her shrank. People were walking up to New Brinsley, she saw the lights in the houses, twenty yards further on were the broad windows of the Prince of Wales, very warm and bright, and the loud voices of men could be heard distinctly. What a fool she had been to imagine that anything had happened to him! He was merely drinking over there at the Prince of Wales. She faltered. She had never yet been to fetch him, and she never would go. So she continued her walk towards the long straggling line of houses, standing blank on the highway. She entered a passage between the dwellings.

Mr. Rigley?—Yes! Did you want him? No, he's not in at this minute.

The raw boned woman leaned forward from her dark scullery and peered at the other, upon whom fell a dim light through the blind of the kitchen window.

Is it Mrs. Bates? she asked in a tone tinged with respect.

Yes. I wondered if your Master was at home. Mine hasn't come yet.

Asn't e? Oh, Jack's been 'ome an' ad is dinner an' gone out. E's just gone for 'alf an hour afore bedtime. Did you call at the Prince of Wales?

No——

No, you didn't like—! It's not very nice. The other woman was indulgent. There was an awkward pause. Jack never said nothink about—about your Mester,' she said.

No!—I expect he's stuck in there!'

Elizabeth Bates said this bitterly, and with recklessness. She knew that the woman across the yard was standing at her door listening, but she did not care. As she turned

Stop a minute! I'll just go and ask Jack if he knows anything, said Mrs. Rigley

Oh, no—I wouldn't like to put—!

"Yes, I will, if you'll just step inside and see as the childer doesn't come downstairs and set themselves afire

Elizabeth Bates, murmuring a remonstrance, stepped inside. The other woman apologized for the state of the room.

The kitchen needed apology. There were little frocks and trousers and childish undergarments on the squab and on the floor, and a litter of playthings everywhere. On the black American cloth of the table were pieces of bread and cake, crusts, slops, and a teapot with cold tea.

Eh, ours is just as bad, said Elizabeth Bates, looking at the woman, not at the house. Mrs. Rigley put a shawl over her head and hurried out, saying

I shanna be a minute

The other sat, noting with faint disapproval the general untidiness of the room. Then she fell to counting the shoes of various sizes scattered over the floor. There were twelve. She sighed and said to herself, No wonder!—glancing at the litter. There came the scratching of two pairs of feet on the yard, and the Ringleys entered. Elizabeth Bates rose. Rigley was a big man, with very large bones. His head looked particularly bony. Across his temple was a blue scar, caused by a wound got in the pit, a wound in which the coal dust remained blue like tattooing.

Asna he come whoam yit?" asked the man, without any form of greeting but with deference and sympathy. I couldna say wheer he is—es non ower theer!—he jerked his head to signify the Prince of Wales.

Es appen gone up to the Yew, said Mrs. Rigley.

There was another pause. Rigley had evidently something to get off his mind.

Ah left im finishin a stint, he began. 'Loose all 'ad bin gone about ten minutes when we com'n away, an I shouted, Are ter

comin, Walt? an' e said, Go on, Ah shanna be but a ef minnit, so we com n ter th bottom, me an Bowers, thinkin as e wor just behint, an 'ud come up i th next bantle——

He stood perplexed, as if answering a charge of deserting his mate Elizabeth Bates, now again certain of disaster, hastened to reassure him

I expect e's gone up to th Yew Tree, as you say It's not the first time I've fretted myself into a fever before now He'll come home when they carry him

Ay, isn't it too bad! deplored the other woman

I'll just step up to Dick's an see if e is theer offered the man, afraid of appearing alarmed, afraid of taking liberties

Oh, I wouldn't think of bothering you that far, said Elizabeth Bates, with emphasis, but he knew she was glad of his offer

As they stumbled up the entry, Elizabeth Bates heard Rigley's wife run across the yard and open her neighbour's door At this, suddenly all the blood in her body seemed to switch away from her heart

Mind! warned Rigley Ah've said many a time as Ah'd fill up them ruts in this entry, sumb dy'll be breakin their legs yit

She recovered herself and walked quickly along with the miner

I don't like leaving the children in bed, and nobody in the house, she said

No, you dunna! he replied courteously They were soon at the gate of the cottage

Well, I shanna be many minnits Dunna you be frettin now, e'll be all right, said the butty

Thank you very much, Mr Rigley, she replied

You're welcome! he stammered, moving away I shanna be many minnits

The house was quiet Elizabeth Bates took off her hat and shawl, and rolled back the rug When she had finished, she sat down It was a few minutes past nine She was startled by the rapid chuff of the winding engine at the pit, and the sharp whirr of the brakes on the rope as it descended Again she felt the painful sweep of her blood, and she put her hand to her side, saying aloud, Good gracious!—it's only the nine o'clock deputy going down, rebuking herself

She sat still, listening Half an hour of this, and she was wearied out

What am I working myself up like this for? she said pitifully to herself, I sll only be doing myself some damage

She took out her sewing again

At a quarter to ten there were footsteps One person! She watched for the door to open It was an elderly woman, in a black bonnet and a black woollen shawl—his mother She was about sixty years old pale, with blue eyes, and her face all wrinkled and lamentable She shut the door and turned to her daughter in law peevishly

Eh, Lizzie, whatever shall we do, whatever shall we do! she cried

Elizabeth drew back a little, sharply

What is it, mother? she said

The elder woman seated herself on the sofa

I don't know, child, I can't tell you! —she shook her head slowly Elizabeth sat watching her, anxious and vexed

'I don't know, replied the grandmother, sighing very deeply

There's no end to my troubles, there isn't The things I've gone through, I'm sure it's enough—! She wept without wiping her eyes, the tears running

But, mother, interrupted Elizabeth, what do you mean? What is it?

The grandmother slowly wiped her eyes The fountains of her tears were stopped by Elizabeth's directness She wiped her eyes slowly

Poor child! Eh, you poor thing! she moaned I don't know what we're going to do, I don't—and you as you are—it's a thing, it is indeed!

Elizabeth waited

Is he dead? she asked, and at the words her heart swung violently, though she felt a slight flush of shame at the ultimate extravagance of the question Her words sufficiently frightened the old lady, almost brought her to herself

Don't say so, Elizabeth! We'll hope it's not as bad as that, no, may the Lord spare us that, Elizabeth Jack Rigley came just as

I was sittin down to a glass afore going to bed, an e said, ‘‘Appen you ll go down th line, Mrs Bates Walt s had an accident Appen you ll go an sit wı ’er till we can get him home I hadnt time to ask him a word afore he was gone An I put my bonnet on an come straight down, LIZZIE I thought to myself, Eh, that poor blessed child, if anybody should come an tell her of a sudden, theres no knowin what ll appen to er You mustnt let it upset you, LIZZIE—or you know what to expect How long is it, six months—or is it five, LIZZIE? Ay! —the old woman shook her head— time slips on it slips on! Ay!

Elizabeths thoughts were busy elsewhere If he was killed—would she be able to manage on the little pension and what she could earn?—she counted up rapidly If he was hurt—they wouldnt take him to the hospital—how tiresome he would be to nurse!—but perhaps shed be able to get him away from the drink and his hateful ways She would—while he was ill The tears offered to come to her eyes at the picture But what sentimental luxury was this she was beginning?—She turned to consider the children At any rate she was absolutely necessary for them They were her business

Ay! repeated the old woman, it seems but a week or two since he brought me his first wages Ay—he was a good lad, Elizabeth, he was, in his way I dont know why he got to be such a trouble, I dont t! He was a happy lad at home, only full of spirits But theres no mistake hes been a handful of trouble, he has! I hope the Lord ll spare him to mend his ways I hope so, I hope so Youve had a sight o trouble with him, Elizabeth, you have indeed But he was a jolly enough lad wı me, he was, I can assure you I dont know how it is

The old woman continued to muse aloud, a monotonous irritating sound, while Elizabeth thought concentratedly, startled once, when she heard the winding-engine chuff quickly, and the brakes skurr with a shriek Then she heard the engine more slowly, and the brakes made no sound The old woman did not notice Elizabeth waited in suspense The mother-in law talked, with lapses into silence

But he wasnt your son, LIZZIE, an it makes a difference What-

ever he was, I remember him when he was little, an I learned to understand him and to make allowances You've got to make allowances for them——

It was half-past ten, and the old woman was saying But it's trouble from beginning to end, you're never too old for trouble, never too old for that—— when the gate banged back, and there were heavy feet on the steps

I'll go, Lizzie, let me go, cried the old woman, rising But Elizabeth was at the door It was a man in pit clothes

They're bringin' im, Missis, he said Elizabeth's heart halted a moment Then it surged on again, almost suffocating her

Is he—is it bad? she asked

The man turned away, looking at the darkness

The doctor says e'd been dead hours E saw im i th lamp-cabin

The old woman, who stood just behind Elizabeth, dropped into a chair, and folded her hands, crying Oh, my boy, my boy!

Hush! said Elizabeth, with a sharp twitch of a frown 'Be still, mother, don't waken th children I wouldn't have them down for anything!

The old woman moaned softly, rocking herself The man was drawing away Elizabeth took a step forward

How was it? she asked

'Well, I couldn't say for sure, the man replied very ill at ease E wor finishin a stint an th butties ad gone, an a lot o stuff come down atop n im

And crushed him? cried the widow, with a shudder

No, said the man, it fell at th back of im E wor under th face, an it niver touched im It shut im in It seems e wor smothered

Elizabeth shrank back She heard the old woman behind her cry

What?—what did e say it was?

The man replied, more loudly E wor smothered!

Then the old woman wailed aloud, and this relieved Elizabeth

Oh, mother, she said, putting her hand on the old woman, don't waken th children, don't waken th children

She wept a little, unknowing, while the old mother rocked her-

self and moaned Elizabeth remembered that they were bringing him home, and she must be ready They'll lay him in the parlour, she said to herself, standing a moment pale and perplexed

Then she lighted a candle and went into the tiny room The air was cold and damp, but she could not make a fire, there was no fireplace She set down the candle and looked round The candle light glittered on the lustre-glasses, on the two vases that held some of the pink chrysanthemums, and on the dark mahogany There was a cold, deathly smell of chrysanthemums in the room Elizabeth stood looking at the flowers She turned away, and calculated whether there would be room to lay him on the floor, between the couch and the chiffonier She pushed the chairs aside There would be room to lay him down and to step round him Then she fetched the old red tablecloth, and another old cloth, spreading them down to save her bit of carpet She shivered on leaving the parlour, so, from the dresser drawer she took a clean shirt and put it at the fire to air All the time her mother in law was rocking herself in the chair and moaning

You'll have to move from there, mother, said Elizabeth They'll be bringing him in Come in the rocker"

The old mother rose mechanically, and seated herself by the fire, continuing to lament Elizabeth went into the pantry for another candle, and there, in the little penthouse under the naked tiles, she heard them coming She stood still in the pantry doorway, listening She heard them pass the end of the house, and come awkwardly down the three steps, a jumble of shuffling footsteps and muttering voices The old woman was silent The men were in the yard

Then Elizabeth heard Matthews, the manager of the pit, say You go in first, Jim Mind!

The door came open, and the two women saw a collier backing into the room, holding one end of a stretcher, on which they could see the nailed pit-boots of the dead man The two carriers halted, the man at the head stooping to the lintel of the door

Where will you have him? asked the manager, a short, white bearded man

Elizabeth roused herself and came from the pantry carrying the unlighted candle

In the parlour, she said

In there, Jim! pointed the manager, and the carriers backed round into the tiny room. The coat with which they had covered the body fell off as they awkwardly turned through the two doorways, and the women saw their man naked to the waist, lying stripped for work. The old woman began to moan in a low voice of horror.

Lay th' stretcher at th' side, snapped the manager, 'an put im on th' cloths. Mind now, mind! Look you now—!

One of the men had knocked off a vase of chrysanthemums. He stared awkwardly, then they set down the stretcher. Elizabeth did not look at her husband. As soon as she could get in the room, she went and picked up the broken vase and the flowers.

Wait a minute! she said.

The three men waited in silence while she mopped up the water with a duster.

Eh, what a job, what a job, to be sure! the manager was saying, rubbing his brow with trouble and perplexity. Never knew such a thing in my life, never! He'd no business to ha' been left. I never knew such a thing in my life! Fell over him clean as a whistle, an' shut him in. Not four foot of space, there wasn't—yet it scarce bruised him.

He looked down at the dead man, lying prone, half naked, all grimed with coal dust.

Sphyxiated, the doctor said. It is the most terrible job I've ever known. Seems as if it was done o' purpose. Clean over him, an' shut im in, like a mouse-trap—he made a sharp descending gesture with his hand.

The colliers standing by jerked aside their heads in hopeless comment.

The horror of the thing bristled upon them all.

Then they heard the girl's voice upstairs calling shrilly. Mother, mother—who is it? Mother, who is it?

Elizabeth hurried to the foot of the stairs and opened the door.

Go to sleep! she commanded sharply. What are you shouting about? Go to sleep at once—there's nothing—

Then she began to mount the stairs. They could hear her on

the boards, and on the plaster floor of the little bedroom. They could hear her distinctly.

'What's the matter now?—what's the matter with you, silly thing?—her voice was much agitated, with an unreal gentleness.

I thought it was some men come, said the plaintive voice of the child. Has he come?

'Yes, they've brought him. There's nothing to make a fuss about. Go to sleep now, like a good child.

They could hear her voice in the bedroom, they waited whilst she covered the children under the bedclothes.

Is he drunk? asked the girl, timidly, faintly.

No! No—he's not! He—he's asleep.

Is he asleep downstairs?

'Yes—and don't make a noise.

There was silence for a moment, then the men heard the frightened child again.

What's that noise?'

It's nothing, I tell you, what are you bothering for?

The noise was the grandmother moaning. She was oblivious of everything, sitting on her chair rocking and moaning. The manager put his hand on her arm and bade her. Sh—sh!!

The old woman opened her eyes and looked at him. She was shocked by this interruption, and seemed to wonder.

What time is it?—the plaintive thin voice of the child, sinking back unhappily into sleep, asked this last question.

Ten o'clock, answered the mother more softly. Then she must have bent down and kissed the children.

Matthews beckoned to the men to come away. They put on their caps and took up the stretcher. Stepping over the body they tiptoed out of the house. None of them spoke till they were far from the wakeful children.

When Elizabeth came down she found her mother alone on the parlour floor, leaning over the dead man, the tears dropping on him.

We must lay him out, the wife said. She put on the kettle, then returning knelt at the feet, and began to unfasten the knotted

leather laces The room was clammy and dim with only one candle, so that she had to bend her face almost to the floor At last she got off the heavy boots and put them away

You must help me now, she whispered to the old woman Together they stopped the man

When they arose, saw him lying in the naive dignity of death, the women stood arrested in fear and respect For a few moments they remained still, looking down, the old mother whimpering Elizabeth felt countermanded She saw him, how utterly inviolable he lay in himself She had nothing to do with him She could not accept it Stooping, she laid her hand on him, in claim He was still warm, for the mine was hot where he had died His mother had his face between her hands, and was murmuring in coherently The old tears fell in succession as drops from wet leaves, the mother was not weeping, merely her tears flowed Elizabeth embraced the body of her husband, with cheek and lips She seemed to be listening, inquiring, trying to get some connection But she could not She was driven away He was impregnable

She rose, went into the kitchen, where she poured warm water into a bowl, brought soap and flannel and a soft towel

I must wash him, she said

Then the old mother rose stiffly, and watched Elizabeth as she carefully washed his face, carefully brushing the big blonde moustache from his mouth with the flannel She was afraid with a bottomless fear, so she ministered to him The old woman, jealous, said

Let me wipe him! —and she kneeled on the other side drying slowly as Elizabeth washed her big black bonnet sometimes brushing the dark head of her daughter They worked thus in silence for a long time They never forgot it was death, and the touch of the man's dead body gave them strange emotions, different in each of the women, a great dread possessed them both, the mother felt the lie was given to her womb, she was denied, the wife felt the utter isolation of the human soul, the child within her was a weight apart from her

At last it was finished He was a man of handsome body, and

his face showed no traces of drink He was blonde, full fleshed, with fine limbs But he was dead

Bless him, whispered his mother, looking always at his face, and speaking out of sheer terror "Dear lad—bless him! She spoke in a faint, sibilant ecstasy of fear and mother love

Elizabeth sank down again to the floor, and put her face against his neck, and trembled and shuddered But she had to draw away again He was dead, and her living flesh had no place against his A great dread and weariness held her she was so unavailing Her life was gone like this

White as milk he is, clear as a twelve month baby, bless him, the darling! the old mother murmured to herself Not a mark on him, clear and clean and white, beautiful as ever a child was made, she murmured with pride Elizabeth kept her face hidden

He went peaceful, Lizzie—peaceful as sleep Isn't he beautiful, the lamb? Ay—he must ha made his peace, Lizzie Appen he made it all right, Lizzie, shut in there Hed have time He wouldn't look like this if he hadn't made his peace The lamb, the dear lamb Eh, but he had a hearty laugh I loved to hear it He had the heartiest laugh, Lizzie, as a lad—

Elizabeth looked up The man's mouth was fallen back, slightly open under the the cover of the moustache The eyes, half shut, did not show glazed in the obscurity Life with its smoky burning gone from him, had left him apart and utterly alien to her And she knew what a stranger he was to her In her womb was ice of fear, because of this separate stranger with whom she had been living as one flesh Was this what it all meant—utter, intact separateness, obscured by heat of living? In dread she turned her face away The fact was too deadly There had been nothing between them, and yet they had come together, exchanging their nakedness repeatedly Each time he had taken her, they had been two isolated beings, far apart as now He was no more responsible than she The child was like ice in her womb For as she looked at the dead man her mind, cold and detached, said clearly 'Who am I? What have I been doing? I have been fighting a husband who did not exist *He* existed all the time What wrong have I done? What was that I have been living with? There lies

the reality, this man —And her soul died in her for fear she knew she had never seen him, he had never seen her, they had met in the dark and had fought in the dark, not knowing whom they met nor whom they fought And now she saw, and turned silent in seeing For she had been wrong She had said he was something he was not, she had felt familiar with him Whereas he was apart all the while, living as she never lived, feeling as she never felt

In fear and shame she looked at his naked body, that she had known falsely And he was the father of her children Her soul was torn from her body and stood apart She looked at his naked body and was ashamed, as if she had denied it After all, it was itself It seemed awful to her She looked at his face, and she turned her own face to the wall For his look was other than hers, his way was not her way She had denied him what he was—she saw it now She had refused him as himself —And this had been her life, and his life —She was grateful to death, which restored the truth And she knew she was not dead

And all the while her heart was bursting with grief and pity for him What had he suffered? What stretch of horror for this helpless man! She was rigid with agony She had not been able to help him He had been cruelly injured, this naked man, this other being, and she could make no reparation There were the children—but the children belonged to life This dead man had nothing to do with them He and she were only channels through which life had flowed to issue in the children She was a mother—but how awful she knew it now to have been a wife And he, dead now, how awful he must have felt it to be a husband She felt that in the next world he would be a stranger to her If they met there, in the beyond, they would only be ashamed of what had been before The children had come, for some mysterious reason, out of both of them But the children did not unite them Now he was dead, she knew how eternally he was apart from her, how eternally he had nothing more to do with her She saw this episode of her life closed They had denied each other in life Now he had withdrawn An anguish came over her It was finished then it had become hopeless between them long before he died Yet he had been her husband But how little!

‘Have you got his shirt, Lizabeth?’

Elizabeth turned without answering, though she strove to weep and behave as her mother-in-law expected. But she could not, she was silenced. She went into the kitchen and returned with the garment.

It is aired, she said, grasping the cotton shirt here and there to try. She was almost ashamed to handle him, what right had she or anyone to lay hands on him, but her touch was humble on his body. It was hard work to clothe him. He was so heavy and inert. A terrible dread gripped her all the while that he could be so heavy and utterly inert, unresponsive, apart. The horror of the distance between them was almost too much for her—it was so infinite a gap she must look across.

At last it was finished. They covered him with a sheet and left him lying, with his face bound. And she fastened the door of the little parlour, lest the children should see what was lying there. Then, with peace sunk heavy on her heart, she went about making tidy the kitchen. She knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame.

WILLIAM PLOMER



Thy Neighbour's Creed

"Are you afraid of death?" old Kurodake asked me suddenly, not fixing me with a hypnotic stare or anything like that. Indeed his eyes were cast down on the bowl of rice he was holding in his left hand, while his right, poised in mid air, lightly held a pair of antique ivory chopsticks which he used to wash carefully and put away in an old lacquer case after every meal. He carried it about in his sleeve, as one might carry a spectacle case. My eyes rested for a moment on his hands, which were of an extraordinary delicacy and agility, and young looking, then I looked at his face as if to meet his question. He was still looking down, and there was a ghost of a smile on his lips, not a cynical smile, but tranquil, like the smile on the face of a carved *bodhisattva*. The other members of the family were looking at me expectantly, and Mrs. Shiroy, the old man's niece, tittered nervously and hid the lower half of her face in her sleeve as if she was a schoolgirl instead of a grandmother.

"What a strange question to be asked at breakfast-time," I remarked defensively, and smiled politely. As if I had made a joke, Mrs. Shiroy lowered her sleeve and tittered quite openly, her husband showed even more front teeth than usual, and her son Hajime laughed, I think out of sheer good nature. The old man, quickly manipulating his chopsticks as if they were part of him, took a couple of mouthfuls of rice and a small pickled plum, which he picked up as deftly as a watchmaker might pick up a jewel, and then raised his eyes, over which the lids drooped a little, and looked at me as if still awaiting an answer. As I was rather afraid of him, for his brain was as delicate and agile as his hands, I wanted to avoid giving a banal answer, which would

have disappointed him, or a dishonest one, which he would at once have seen through

I think of death quite often,' I said Sometimes I'm afraid of it, but not always Sometimes, when I'm enjoying life and looking forward to things I want to do, I resent the necessity of dying and wish I could live for ever Sometimes, when gloomy or disillusioned, I think I should welcome death So I suppose it's a matter of mood

He nodded, with an air of appreciation, but said nothing I dare say he found my reply too commonplace Outside in the street, the clatter of daily life was increasing, but it was a hot morning, and it was going to be a very hot day, and somehow the tempo of life seemed already a little slowed down by the heat One can be scorched in the summer in Hiroshima

The old man was not the sort of person to whom one easily says, 'It's going to be awfully hot today, don't you think?' Hajime and I are thinking of going for a swim With the approach of age, Hajime had explained to me, his great-uncle was withdrawing his mind from earthly things and in the autumn would retire, in the traditional way, to a lonely hide-out in the mountains, where he would sit at night listening to a distant waterfall and watching the moon rise above a grove of bamboos So I said instead, 'But what made you ask me that question, sir, this morning?'

I have seen some foreigners, of course, said Kurodake, 'but this is the first time I have had the chance of talking with one It is very interesting for me'

I bowed slightly, as if to signify that I would do my best not to be a bore, and looked out over his shoulder into the garden, to which the side of the room was open It was a small, formal, flowerless garden, very clean, with evergreens, a fantastically shaped rock, a stone lantern, a pool of water everything was conventional and symbolical and orderly Violent, emotional, deeply pessimistic, the Japanese soul (if one could speak in such a general way) evidently needed, I reflected for the thousandth time, a rigid scheme of everyday life to contain and direct its energies to bound its fears and circumscribe its joys After the slight first shock of surprise that the great-uncle had never before spoken to

a foreigner, I remembered that he had hardly been out of Hiroshima in his life, and that Hiroshima was just a provincial town, through which foreigners might pass by train to Kobé or Shimono-seki, but in which there was seldom any reason for them to linger he had succeeded, I had gathered from Hajimé, to a comfortable old fashioned firm of *sake* brewers, and had enjoyed ample leisure, which he had devoted to editing the works on occultism and esoteric Buddhism of a seventeenth century writer, whose name I never could remember. The great-uncle, the garden, the noises in the street (among which the itinerant fish pedlar's horn sounded forlorn and ancient), the stillness in the room where we were sitting, produced an overwhelming sense of continuity and inevitability.

Hajime's father, a mild and modest gentleman of moderate means, who had never done a stroke of work or hurt a fly in his life, had unclosed a small black silk fan and was fanning himself without haste and without rest. His face was now composed, with no expression except of benevolence he seemed to be waiting quietly for an interesting dialogue about death between his uncle-in-law and his foreign guest, and waiting quietly, too, for death itself. One could imagine him folding his fan, and leaning back with a sigh at last. Mrs. Shiroy, as a woman, knew that speculations about death boil no rice, on her knees beside the low black lacquer table, she was clearing away the breakfast things and no doubt thinking already about the preparation of luncheon, since even philosophers must eat. Hajimé said nothing. He was sitting cross-legged on a flat silk cushion and smoking a cigarette, his springy hair, which he wore long and parted in the middle, had fallen forward and was hanging over his eyes. I wondered what he was thinking.

I suppose, said the old man, who had put away his chopsticks, and was now playing with a chaplet of big amber beads as if he were telling them, that you think of death as the beginning of personal immortality?"

'Christians do, I said, and I think many people feel that they live on in a way after death, not so much in the memories of those who have known them, as in the repercussions of their good and

bad actions, however great or small, among those who have known them

Ha! said old Kurodaké, as if the right nail had now been hit on the head But supposing there were no repercussions of that kind?

But there surely must be repercussions, I said Everything one says or does all one's life, or even refrains from doing has consequences that cannot be measured Nor knowest thou what argument Thy life to thy neighbour's creed hath lent

Hajime helped me to explain the meaning of this quotation

Yes, said Kurodake, 'I understand, I agree But supposing that when you died your body was destroyed without trace, and your house, and all your possessions, and all your relations, friends and even acquaintances, and every personal relic or reminder of yourself?

You mean in an earthquake? I said, for in Japan one is never long unconscious that one is menaced by the very earth one walks on

I mean more thoroughly than in an earthquake, he said
Fire?

I mean more thoroughly than by fire, he said

I can hardly imagine that I felt the conversation was getting a little dotty

I can imagine it, said Kurodake, and his eyelids drooped so low over his eyes that his expression suggested omniscience It was uncomfortable, and I looked away

Have you in mind, I asked, human destructiveness or an act of God?

Human destructiveness, he said

I glanced appealingly at Hajime, but failed to catch his eye A klaxon sounded suddenly in the street like an alarm, and made me jump I had been warned that the summer was fierce in Hiroshima, and although the sweat was running down my face I had forgotten for the moment all about the projected swim I told myself that the old man was dotty and must be humoured, but when I looked at his immobile eyes and his restless fingers playing with his beads I reminded myself that a madman lives by

truths of his own, and that the sane must seem to him not only his persecutors, but his ignorant persecutors

In that case, you see, Kurodake went on, 'repercussions of personal acts would be of no importance Everything would depend on the actions of the spirit after death

It might feel revengeful, I said

Kurodake laughed abruptly, but made no comment

I advise you to leave Hiroshima, he said

This was rather blunt

Oh! I exclaimed, I hope I haven't offended you?

No, no, no! He smiled almost broadly I speak as a friend He instantly became grave again What I have in mind is that you should die in the customary way—with repercussions—and avoid the new kind of death, which will impose a great burden of responsibility, and work, on the spirit I desire your spirit to be at rest.

I bowed again, and said And the same to you

You are not made he remarked, for a life of action You should lead the life of a scholar or hermit

I thanked him for the advice, and he rose to his feet, springily and effortlessly, like a young man, and bowed himself out of the room Mr Shiroi had also gone, though I had not noticed his going

Alone with Hajime, I asked a good many questions about his great-uncle Kurodake's wife, it appeared was dead He had one son, an officer in the navy, with whom he had quarrelled and whom he now never saw or mentioned Hajime did not know the nature of the quarrel, but in the family it was supposed that Kurodake had wanted his son to be a quietist like himself, whereas the son had been determined to live an active life the father had allowed the son to have his own way, but after, in due course, finding him a bride, he had refused to have anything more to do with him And what sort of reputation, I asked, had Kurodake? Among the business men of Hiroshima said Hajimé, his great uncle was regarded as slothful and unenterprising, among scholars he was held in respect, among servants and common people he was spoken of as a sorcerer—he had undoubtedly discovered missing persons and objects, of whose whereabouts he could not

have had conscious knowledge, and he was said to have foretold future events of a private nature

And tell me, Hajime, what do your father and mother think of him?

They respect him. He is continually urging my father to sell our house and go and live in the country, where he owns some land, near Ozu in Shikoku. My father has always lived in this house, which was built by his grandfather, and does not wish to leave it, but I think in the end he will agree.

Why? Because of this new kind of destructiveness which Kurodake San prophesies, and which I must say I find rather fanciful? Is there some chemical industry in Hiroshima, where they do research into new explosives or something? But I had better not ask questions like that, or you'll think I'm a spy—although you know how little interested I really am in such matters.

We did not go swimming that day, but lolled about with books and cold drinks and a gramophone. I felt uneasy all day, and all day it grew hotter and hotter. In the evening we were to go out in a boat to see the great annual religious festival when, with much ceremony, a sacred object is rowed across to the sacred island of Miyajima. When I heard that Kurodake would be with us, my feelings were mixed. I thought that with his alleged powers of divination he perhaps already knew more about me than I knew myself.

After dark we were out on the water—so, it seemed, was half Hiroshima. There was no wind and no thunder, but the sky was overcast and the air more than sultry. Although we were only wearing thin cotton *yukata*, Hajime and I were still very hot. Mr. Shiroi had taken off his panama hat and was still using his fan, his wife, whose hair had been newly dressed, looked demure in a matronly way—ladylike is perhaps the word, and Kurodake, who sat with us in the stern of the motor launch, handed me a pair of field-glasses which he had thoughtfully brought for my use. He seemed in a less vatic mood, made jokes and laughed at other people's jokes and looked and behaved (though with dignity) more like a young man than an old one. At the same time his black *haori* coat, ornamented in the middle of the back and on the sleeves with a feudal crest in white (I can see it now—inside a

circle, three wavy lines to represent running water), gave him a slightly hieratic air

Battleships from Kuré, anchored along the line of the procession, were playing with their searchlights, turning them now on the countless boatloads of spectators, now on the sky, now towards the invisible horizon. There were lights everywhere, lanterns, torches, staccato music from a *samusen* came sharply amplified over the water, and in due course the holy boat arrived propelled by naked oarsmen, standing and absolutely uniform and rhythmical in their movements, which were timed exactly with the thudding of drums struck by musicians in sacred vestments—those drums which are held against the left shoulder and struck with the flat right hand, and which are somehow much more dramatic than the drums of Europe. At the same time a very ancient chant arose from a party of seated singers—though singers seems hardly the word for the utterers of those deep, stylized cries, so eloquent of pain and of resignation to pain. In the middle of the boat, guarded by standing priests, a sacred ark glittered with gilding and lacquer and brocade.

Caught by a searchlight, this gliding coloured vision became instantly bleached and ghostly, excited by the heat and by *sake* and by the drums, and by the whole occasion, I thought again of death and destruction and of Kurodake's phrase about the actions of the spirit after death.

Near and far, fireworks were being let off—emeralds and rubies flowed in galaxies, hung suspended, drifted, vanished, bunches of luminosity, like magic laburnum or wistaria, suddenly hung over the sides of boats and seemed to produce magically in the water swarms of mauve or golden bees, there was a hissing and sputtering and from our own boat a fountain of little globes, blood red and incandescent white, played high out in a curve over the water. Looking back towards Hiroshima, one could see a huge *feu de joie*, no doubt in some open space like the parade ground at the barracks or perhaps just outside the town, looking towards Miyajima, one could trace the progress of the holy boat and hear the ever fainter reverberations of the ritual chanters and the drummers. Seeing me looking in that direction, and knowing that Hajimé and I were going there the next day, Kurodake told me

several useful or interesting things about the sacred island. Then he said in quite a matter of fact tone of voice

It may interest you to know that on that island nobody may be born and nobody may be buried (I made a polite expression of interest, as if I was hearing this for the first time) It is not generally known, he went on, that in Hiroshima many people have been born who will never be buried

Ah, is that so? I said gravely, feeling that he ought to be humoured about his obsession. It was so hot that I felt disinclined to question him, and thought to myself that there had been previous instances of prophets dwelling on the future doom of the cities to which they belonged

As we headed for home, two searchlights met above the distant bonfire and showed that in the windless air the smoke had risen like a tall column and had flattened out at the top. It appeared motionless

What a peculiar shape that smoke is, I said, inspecting it through the field glasses. It looks just like a poisonous toadstool

As soon as I had said this I thought it sounded rather precious. Why hadn't I said simply 'like a mushroom'? But the smoke was livid and discoloured, it *did* look rather like a poisonous toadstool. Mr. Shiroy nodded assent, displaying, in the pinkish light of a lantern hanging just over his head, an affable keyboard of teeth. Kurodake said nothing. His eyelids were heavy, as if with sleep, but his eyes were open and were looking towards the smoke. When I looked again in the same direction the searchlights had vanished, the smoke was no longer visible, and the bonfire had died down. I wondered if I had imagined the thing, especially when I asked Hajime if he had seen it and he said he had not

I never saw Kurodake after that night. He did not appear at breakfast the next morning, and Hajime and I left before lunch for Miyajima, where we spent some happy days

Some weeks later, when I was back in Tokyo, I had a letter from Hajime in which he said that his great uncle was no longer under his father's roof. One sunny day, walking in the street with Mrs. Shiroy, Kurodake had exclaimed that *some* of the passers-by had no shadows. He had grown very excited, and had begun pointing wildly at one person after another, attracting

much attention and creating something of a disturbance, which held up the traffic. Just as a policeman was approaching, Kurodake fell to the ground in a fit. He had been removed to a mental hospital and some anxiety was felt about his condition. Hajime said his mother had been greatly distressed by the whole affair. Her embarrassment in the street had been extreme, but fortunately her great uncle had mostly singled out young people, especially young girls, when he was among his extraordinary delusion. He had only denounced two elderly persons as shadowless, one of them was Mrs. Tanaka, the bank manager's wife, who had been very much offended.

I still have Hajime's letter. It is dated September, 1927

1946

EUDORA WELTY



A Still Moment

Lorenzo Dow rode the Old Natchez Trace at top speed upon a race horse, and the cry of the itinerant Man of God, I must have souls! And souls I must have! rang in his own windy ears. He rode as if never to stop, toward his night's appointment.

It was the hour of sunset. All the souls that he had saved and all those he had not took dusky shapes in the mist that hung between the high banks, and seemed by their great number and density to block his way, and showed no signs of melting or changing back into mist, so that he feared his passage was to be difficult forever. The poor souls that were not saved were darker and more pitiful than those that were, and still there was not any of the radiance he would have hoped to see in such a congregation.

Light up, in God's name! he called, in the pain of his disappointment.

Then a whole swarm of fireflies instantly flickered all around him up and down, back and forth, first one golden light and then another, flashing without any of the weariness that had held back the souls. These were the signs sent from God that he had not seen the accumulated radiance of saved souls because he was not able, and that his eyes were more able to see the fireflies of the Lord than His blessed souls.

"Lord, give me the strength to see the angels when I am in Paradise," he said. Do not let my eyes remain in this failing proportion to my loving heart always.

He gasped and held on. It was that day's complexity of horse trading that had left him in the end with a Spanish race horse for which he was bound to send money in November from

Georgia Riding faster on the beast and still faster until he felt as if he were flying he sent thoughts of love with matching speed to his wife Peggy in Massachusetts He found it effortless to love at a distance He could look at the flowering trees and love Peggy in fullness, just as he could see his visions and love God And Peggy, to whom he had not spoken until he could speak fateful words (Would she accept of such an object as him?), Peggy, the bride, with whom he had spent a few hours of time, showing of herself a small round handwriting, declared all in one letter her first, that she felt the same as he, and that the fear was never of separation, but only of death

Lorenzo well knew that it was Death that opened underfoot, that rippled by at night, that was the silence the birds did their singing in He was close to death, closer than any animal or bird On the back of one horse after another, winding them all, he was always riding toward it or away from it, and the Lord sent him directions with protection in His mind

Just then he rode into a thicket of Indians taking aim with their new guns One stepped out and took the horse by the bridle, it stopped at a touch, and the rest made a closing circle The guns pointed

'Incline' the inner voice spoke sternly and with its customary lightning quickness

Lorenzo inclined all the way forward and put his head to the horse's silky mane, his body to its body, until a bullet meant for him would endanger the horse and make his death of no value Prone he rode out through the circle of Indians, his obedience to the voice leaving him almost fearless, almost careless with joy

But as he straightened and pressed ahead, care caught up with him again Turning half beast and half divine, dividing himself like a heathen Centaur, he had escaped his death once more But was it to be always by some metamorphosis of himself that he escaped, some humiliation of his faith, some admission to strength and argumentation and not frailty? Each time when he acted so it was at the command of an instinct that he took at once as the word of an angel, until too late, when he knew it was the word of the devil He had roared like a tiger at Indians, he had submerged himself in water blowing the savage bubbles of the alli-

gator, and they skirted him by He had prostrated himself to appear dead, and deceived bears But all the time God would have protected him in His own way, less hurried, more divine

Even now he saw a serpent crossing the Trace, giving out knowing glances

He cried, I know you now! , and the serpent gave him one look out of which all the fire had been taken, and went away in two darts into the tangle

He rode on, all expectation, and the voices in the throats of the wild beasts went, almost without his noticing when, into words Praise God, they said Deliver us from one another Birds especially sang of divine love which was the one ceaseless protection Peace, in peace, were their words so many times when they spoke from the briars, in a courteous sort of inflection, and he turned his countenance toward all perched creatures with a benevolence striving to match their own

He rode on past the little intersecting trails, letting himself be guided by voices and by lights It was battlesounds he heard most, sending him on, but sometimes ocean sounds, that long beat of waves that would make his heart pound and retreat as heavily as they, and he despaired again in his failure in Ireland when he took a voyage and persuaded with the Catholics with his back against the door, and then ran away to their cries of Mund the white hat! But when he heard singing it was not the militant and sharp sound of Wesley's hymns, but a soft, tireless and tender air that had no beginning and no end, and the softness of distance, and he had pleaded with the Lord to find out if all this meant that it was wicked but no answer had come

Soon night would descend, and a camp meeting ground ahead would fill with its sinners like the sky with its stars How he hungered for them! He looked in prescience with a longing of love over the throng that waited while the flames of the torches threw change, change, change over their faces How could he bring them enough, if it were not divine love and sufficient warning of all that could threaten them? He rode on faster He was a filler of appointments, and he filled more and more, until his journeys up and down creation were nothing but a shuttle, driving back and forth upon the rich expanse of his vision He was homeless

by his own choice, he must be everywhere at some time, and somewhere soon. There hastening in the wilderness on his flying horse he gave the night's torch-lit crowd a premature benediction, he could not wait. He spread his arms out, one at a time for safety, and he wished, when they would all be gathered in by his tin horn blasts and the inspired words would go out over their heads, to brood above the entire and passionate life of the wide world, to become its rightful part.

He peered ahead. Inhabitants of Time! The wilderness is your souls on earth! he shouted ahead into the treetops. Look about you, if you would view the conditions of your spirit, put here by the good Lord to show you and fright you. These wild places and these trails of awesome loneliness lie nowhere, nowhere, but in your heart.

A dark man, who was James Murrell the outlaw, rode his horse out of a cane brake and began going along beside Lorenzo without looking at him. He had the alternately proud and aggrieved look of a man believing himself to be an instrument in the hands of a power, and when he was young he said at once to strangers that he was being used by Evil, or sometimes he stopped a traveler by shouting: Stop! I'm the Devil! He rode along now talking and drawing out his talk by some deep control of the voice gradually slowing the speed of Lorenzo's horse down until both the horses were softly trotting. He would have wondered that nothing he said was heard, not knowing that Lorenzo listened only to voices of whose heavenly origin he was more certain.

Murrell riding along with his victim to be, Murrell riding, was Murrell talking. He told away at his long tales, with always a distance and a long length of time flowing through them, and all centered about a silent man. In each the silent man would have done a piece of evil, a robbery or a murder, in a place of long ago and it was all made for the revelation in the end that the silent man was Murrell himself, and the long story had happened yesterday, and the place *here*—the Natchez Trace. It would only take one dawning look for the victim to see that all of this was another story and he himself had listened his way

into it, and that he too was about to recede in time (to where the dread was forgotten) for some listener and to live for a listener in the long ago Destroy the present!—that must have been the first thing that was whispered in Murrell's heart—the living moment and the man that lives in it must die before you can go on It was his habit to bring the journey—which might even take days—to a close with a kind of ceremony Turning his face at last into the face of the victim for he had never seen him before now, he would tower up with the sudden height of a man no longer the tale teller but the speechless protagonist, silent at last, one degree nearer the hero Then he would murder the man

But it would always start over This man going forward was going backward with talk He saw nothing, observed no world at all The two ends of his journey pulled at him always and held him in a nowhere, half asleep, smiling and witty, dangling his predicament He was a murderer whose final stroke was over long postponed, who had to bring himself through the greatest tedium to act, as if the whole wilderness, where he was born, were his impediment But behind him and before him he kept in sight a victim, he saw a man fixed and stayed at the point of death—no matter how the man's eyes denied it, a victim, hands spreading to reach as if for the first time for life Contempt! That is what Murrell gave that man

Lorenzo might have understood, if he had not been in haste, that Murrell in laying hold of a man meant to solve his mystery of being It was as if other men, all but himself, would lighten their hold on the secret, upon assault, and let it fly free at death In his violence he was only treating of enigma The violence shook his own body first, like a force gathering, and now he turned in the saddle

Lorenzo's despair had to be kindled as well as his ecstasy, and could not come without that kindling Before the awe-filled moment when the faces were turned up under the flares as though an angel hand tipped their chins, he had no way of telling whether he would enter the sermon by sorrow or by joy But at this moment the face of Murrell was turned toward him, turning at last, all solitary, in its full, and Lorenzo would have seized the man

at once by his black coat and shaken him like prey for a lost soul, so instantly was he certain that the false fire was in his heart instead of the true fire. But Murrell, quick when he was quick, had put his own hand out, a restraining hand, and laid it on the wavelike flesh of the Spanish race horse, which quivered and shuddered at the touch.

They had come to a great live-oak tree at the edge of a low marsh land. The burning sun hung low, like a head lowered on folded arms, and over the long reaches of violet trees the evening seemed still with thought. Lorenzo knew the place from having seen it among many in dreams, and he stopped readily and willingly. He drew rein, and Murrell drew rein, he dismounted and Murrell dismounted, he took a step, and Murrell was there too, and Lorenzo was not surprised at the closeness, how Murrell in his long dark coat and over it his dark face darkening still stood beside him like a brother seeking light.

But in that moment instead of two men coming to stop by the great forked tree, there were three.

From far away, a student, Audubon, had been approaching lightly on the wilderness floor, disturbing nothing in his lightness. The long day of beauty had led him this certain distance. A flock of purple finches that he tried for the first moment to count went over his head. He made a spelling of the soft *pet* of the ivory billed woodpecker. He told himself always remember.

Coming upon the Trace, he looked at the high cedars, azure and still as distant smoke overhead, with their silver roots trailing down on either side like the veins of deepness in this place, and he noted some fact to his memory—this earth that wears but will not crumble or slide or turn to dust, they say it exists in one other spot in the world, Egypt—and then forgot it. He walked quietly. All life used this Trace, and he liked to see the animals move along it in direct, oblivious journeys for they had begun it and made it, the buffalo and deer and the small running creatures before man ever knew where he wanted to go, and birds flew a great mirrored course above. Walking beneath them Audubon remembered how in the cities he had seen these very

birds in his imagination, calling them up whenever he wished even in the hard and glittering outer parlors where if an artist were humble enough to wait, some idle hand held up promised money. He walked lightly and he went as carefully as he had started at two that morning, crayon and paper, a gun and a small bottle of spirits disposed about his body (*Note The mocking birds so gentle that they would scarcely move out of the way*). He looked with care, great abundance had ceased to startle him, and he could see things one by one. In Natchez they had told him of many strange and marvelous birds that were to be found here. Their descriptions had been exact complete, and wildly varying and he took them for inventions and believed that like all the worldly things that came out of Natchez they would be disposed of and shamed by any man's excursion into the reality of Nature.

In the valley he appeared under the tree, a sure man, very sure and tender, as if the touch of all the earth rubbed upon him and the stains of the flowery swamp had made him so.

Lorenzo welcomed him and turned fond eyes upon him. To transmute a man into an angel was the hope that drove him all over the world and never let him flinch from a meeting or withhold good byes for long. This hope insistently divided his life into only two parts journey and rest. There could be no night and day and love and despair and longing and satisfaction to make partitions in the single ecstasy of this alternation. All things were speech.

God created the world, said Lorenzo, and it exists to give testimony. Life is the tongue speak.

But instead of speech there happened a moment of deepest silence.

Audubon said nothing because he had gone without speaking a word for days. He did not regard his thoughts for the birds and animals as susceptible, in their first change, to words. His long playing on the flute was not in its origin a talking to himself. Rather than speak to order or describe, he would always draw a deer with a stroke across it to communicate his need of venison to an Indian. He had only found words when he discovered that there is much otherwise lost that can be noted down each

item in its own day, and he wrote often now in a journal, not wanting anything to be lost the way it had been all the past, and he would write about a day, Only sorry that the Sun Sets

Murrell, his cheated hand hiding the gun, could only continue to smile at Lorenzo, but he remembered in malice that he had disguised himself once as an Evangelist, and his final words to this victim would have been, One of my disguises was what you are

Then in Murrell Audubon saw what he thought of as acquired sorrow—that cumbrousness and darkness from which the naked Indian, coming just as he was made from God's hand, was so lightly free. He noted the eyes—the dark kind that loved to look through chinks, and saw neither closeness nor distance, light nor shade, wonder nor familiarity. They were narrowed to contract the heart, narrowed to make an averting plan. Audubon knew the finest-drawn tendons of the body and the working of their power, for he had touched them, and he supposed then that in man the enlargement of the eye to see started a motion in the hands to make or do, and that the narrowing of the eye stopped the hand and contracted the heart. Now Murrell's eyes followed an ant on a blade of grass, up the blade and down, many times in the single moment. Audubon had examined the Cave-In Rock where one robber had lived his hiding life, and the air in the cave was the cave-like air that enclosed this man, the same odor, flinty and dark. O secret life, he thought—is it true that the secret is withdrawn from the true disclosure, that man is a cave man, and that the openness I see, the ways through forests, the rivers buming light, the wide arches where the birds fly, are dreams of freedom? If my origin is withheld from me, is my end to be unknown too? Is the radiance I see closed into an interval between two darks, or can it not illuminate them both and discover at last, though it cannot be spoken, what was thought hidden and lost?

In that quiet moment a solitary snowy heron flew down not far away and began to feed beside the marsh water.

At the single streak of flight, the ears of the race horse lifted, and the eyes of both horses filled with the soft lights of sunset, which in the next instant were reflected in the eyes of the men too.

as they all looked into the west toward the heron, and all eyes seemed infused with a sort of wildness

Lorenzo gave the bird a triumphant look, such as a man may bestow upon his own vision, and thought, Nearness is near, lighted in a marsh land, feeding at sunset Praise God, His love has come visible

Murrell, in suspicion pursuing all glances, blinking into a haze, saw only whiteness ensconced in darkness, as if it were a little luminous shell that drew in and held the eyesight When he shaded his eyes, the brand H T on his thumb thrust itself into his own vision, and he looked at the bird with the whole plan of the Mystic Rebellion darting from him as if in rays of the bright reflected light, and he stood looking proudly, leader as he was bound to become of the slaves, the brigands and outcasts of the entire Natchez country, with plans, dates maps burning like a brand into his brain, and he saw himself proudly in a moment of prophecy going down rank after rank of successively bowing slaves to unroll and flaunt an awesome great picture of the Devil colored on a banner

Audubon's eyes embraced the object in the distance and he could see it as carefully as if he held it in his hand It was a snowy heron alone out of its flock He watched it steadily in his care noting the exact inevitable things When it feeds it muddies the water with its foot It was as if each detail about the heron happened slowly in time, and only once He felt again the old stab of wonder—what structure of life bridged the reptiles scale and the heron's feather? That knowledge too had been lost He watched without moving The bird was defenseless in the world except for the intensity of its life and he wondered, how can heat of blood and speed of heart defend it? Then he thought, as always as if it were new and unbelievable, it has nothing in space or time to prevent its flight And he waited, knowing that some birds will wait for a sense of their presence to travel to men before they will fly away from them

Fixed in its pure white profile it stood in the precipitous moment, a plumicorn on its head, its breeding dress extended in rays, eating steadily the little water creatures There was a little space between each man and the others, where they stood over

whelmed No one could say the three had ever met, or that this moment of intersection had ever come in their lives, or its promise fulfilled But before them the white heron rested in the grasses with the evening all around it, lighter and more serene than the evening, flight closed in its body, the circuit of its beauty closed, a bird seen and a bird still, its motion calm as if it were offered Take my flight

What each of them had wanted was simply *all* To save all souls, to destroy all men, to see and to record all life that filled this world—all, all—but now a single frail yearning seemed to go out of the three of them for a moment and to stretch toward this one snowy, shy bird in the marshes It was as if three whirl winds had drawn together at some center, to find there feeding in peace a snowy heron Its own slow spiral of flight could take it away in its own time, but for a little it held them still, it laid quiet over them, and they stood for a moment unburdened

Murrell wore no mask, for his face was that, a face that was aware while he was somnolent, a face that watched for him, and listened for him, alert and nearly brutal, the guard of a planner He was quick without that he might be slow within, he staved off time, he wandered and plotted, and yet his whole desire mounted in him toward the end (was this the end—the sight of a bird feeding at dusk?), toward the instant of confession His incessant deeds were thick in his heart now, and flinging himself to the ground he thought wearily, when all these trees are cut down, and the Trace lost, then my Conspiracy that is yet to spread itself will be disclosed and all the stone loaded bodies of murdered men will be pulled up, and all everywhere will know poor Murrell His look pressed upon Lorenzo, who stared upward, and Audubon, who was taking out his gun, and his eyes squinted up to them in pleading, as if to say, How soon may I speak, and how soon will you pity me? Then he looked back to the bird, and he thought if it would look at him a dread penetration would fill and gratify his heart

Audubon in each act of life was aware of the mysterious origin he half-concealed and half sought for People along the way asked him in their kindness or their rudeness if it were true, that he was born a prince, and was the Lost Dauphin, and

some said it was his secret, and some said that that was what he wished to find out before he died. But if it was his identity that he wished to discover, or if it was what a man had to seize beyond that, the way for him was by endless examination by the care for every bird that flew in his path and every serpent that shone underfoot. Not one was enough, he looked deeper and deeper, on and on, as if for a particular beast or some legendary bird. Some men's eyes persisted in looking outward when they opened to look inward, and to their delight, there outflung was the astonishing world under the sky. When a man at last brought himself to face some mirror surface he still saw the world looking back at him, and if he continued to look, to look closer and closer, what then? The gaze that looks outward must be trained without rest, to be indomitable. It must see as slowly as Murrell's ant in the grass, as exhaustively as Lorenzo's angel of God, and then, Audubon dreamed, with his mind going to his pointed brush, it must see like this, and he tightened his hand on the trigger of the gun and pulled it, and his eyes went closed. In memory the heron was all its solitude, its total beauty. All its whiteness could be seen from all sides at once, its pure feathers were as if counted and known and their array one upon the other would never be lost. But it was not from that memory that he could paint.

His opening eyes met Lorenzo's, close and flashing, and it was on seeing horror deep in them, like fires in abysses, that he recognized it for the first time. He had never seen horror in its purity and clarity until now, in bright blue eyes. He went and picked up the bird. He had thought it to be a female, just as one sees the moon as female, and so it was. He put it in his bag, and started away. But Lorenzo had already gone on, leaning a tilt on the horse which went slowly.

Murrell was left behind, but he was proud of the dispersal, as if he had done it, as if he had always known that three men in simply being together and doing a thing can, by their obstinacy, take the pride out of one another. Each must go away alone, each send the others away alone. He himself had purposely kept to the wildest country in the world, and would have sought it out, the loneliest road. He looked about with satisfaction, and had

Travelers were forever innocent, he believed that was his faith. He lay in wait; his faith was in innocence and his knowledge was of ruin, and had these things been shaken? Now, what could possibly be outside his grasp? Churning all about him like a cloud about the sun was the great folding descent of his thought. Plans of deeds made his thoughts, and they rolled and mingled about his ears as if he heard a dark voice that rose up to overcome the wilderness voice, or was one with it. The night would soon come, and he had gone through the day.

Audubon, splattered and wet, turned back into the wilderness with the heron warm under his hand, his head still light in a kind of trance. It was undeniable, on some Sunday mornings, when he turned over and over his drawings they seemed beautiful to him, through what was dramatic in the conflict of life, or what was exact. What he would draw, and what he had seen, became for a moment one to him then. Yet soon enough, and it seemed to come in that same moment like Lorenzo's horror and the guns firing, he knew that even the sight of the heron which surely he alone had appreciated, had not been all his belonging, and that never could any vision, even any simple sight, belong to him or to any man. He knew that the best he could make would be, after it was apart from his hand, a dead thing and not a live thing, never the essence, only a sum of parts, and that it would always meet with a stranger's sight, and never be one with the beauty in any other man's head in the world. As he had seen the bird most purely at its moment of death, in some fatal way, in his care for looking outward, he saw his long labor most revealingly at the point where it met its limit. Still carefully, for he was trained to see well in the dark, he walked on into the deeper woods, noting all sights, all sounds, and was gentler than they as he went.

In the woods that echoed yet in his ears, Lorenzo riding slowly looked back. The hair rose on his head and his hands began to shake with cold, and suddenly it seemed to him that God Himself, just now, thought of the Idea of Separateness. For surely He had never thought of it before, when the little white heron was flying down to feed. He could understand God's giving Separateness first and then giving Love to follow and heal in its wonder, but God

had reversed this and given Love first and then Separateness, as though it did not matter to Him which came first Perhaps it was that God never counted the moments of Time, Lorenzo did that, among his tasks of love Time did not occur to God Therefore—did He even know of it? How to explain Time and Separateness back to God, Who had never thought of them Who could let the whole world come to grief in a scattering moment?

Lorenzo brought his cold hands together in a clasp and stared through the distance at the place where the bird had been as if he saw it still as if nothing could really take away what had happened to him, the beautiful little vision of the feeding bird Its beauty had been greater than he could account for The sweat of rapture poured down from his forehead, and then he shouted into the marshes

Tempter!

He whuled forward in the saddle and began to hurry the horse to its high speed His camp ground was far away still, though even now they must be lighting the torches and gathering in the multitudes so that at the appointed time he would duly appear in their midst to deliver his address on the subject of In that day when all hearts shall be disclosed

Then the sun dropped below the trees, and the new moon slender and white, hung shyly in the west

EDITH WHARTON



Roman Fever

From the table at which they had been lunching two American ladies of ripe but well cared for middle age moved across the lofty terrace of the Roman restaurant and, leaning on its parapet, looked first at each other, and then down on the outspread glories of the Palatine and the Forum, with the same expression of vague but benevolent approval

As they leaned there a girlish voice echoed up gaily from the stairs leading to the court below Well, come along then, it cried, not to them but to an invisible companion, and let's leave the young things to their knitting, and a voice as fresh laughed back

Oh, look here Babs, not actually *knitting*—— Well, I mean figuratively, rejoined the first After all we haven't left our poor parents much else to do and at that point the turn of the stairs engulfed the dialogue

The two ladies looked at each other again, this time with a tinge of smiling embarrassment, and the smaller and paler one shook her head and coloured slightly

Barbara! she murmured, sending an unheard rebuke after the mocking voice in the stairway

The other lady, who was fuller and higher in colour, with a small determined nose supported by vigorous black eyebrows, gave a good humoured laugh That's what our daughters think of us!

Her companion replied by a deprecating gesture Not of us individually We must remember that It's just the collective modern idea of Mothers And you see—— Half guiltily she drew from her handsomely mounted black hand-bag a twist of crimson silk run through by two fine knitting needles One never knows, she

murmured The new system has certainly given us a good deal of time to kill, and sometimes I get tired just looking—even at this Her gesture was now addressed to the stupendous scene at their feet

The dark lady laughed again, and they both relapsed upon the view, contemplating it in silence, with a sort of diffused serenity which might have been borrowed from the spring of effulgence of the Roman skies The luncheon hour was long past and the two had their end of the vast terrace to themselves At its opposite extremity a few groups detained by a lingering look at the outspread city, were gathering up guide books and fumbling for tips The last of them scattered, and the two ladies were alone on the air washed height

Well, I don't see why we shouldn't just stay here, said Mrs Slade, the lady of the high colour and energetic brows Two derelict basket chairs stood near and she pushed them into the angle of the parapet, and settled herself in one, her gaze upon the Palatine After all, it's still the most beautiful view in the world

It always will be, to me, assented her friend Mrs Ansley, with so slight a stress on the *me* that Mrs Slade, though she noticed it wondered if it were not merely accidental, like the random underlinings of old fashioned letter writers

Grace Ansley was always old fashioned, she thought, and added aloud, with a retrospective smile It's a view we've both been familiar with for a good many years When we first met here we were younger than our girls are now You remember?

Oh, yes, I remember, murmured Mrs Ansley, with the same undefinable stress—There's that head waiter wondering, she interpolated She was evidently far less sure than her companion of herself and of her rights in the world

I'll cure him of wondering, said Mrs Slade, stretching her hand toward a bag as discreetly opulent looking as Mrs Ansley's Signing to the head waiter, she explained that she and her friend were old lovers of Rome, and would like to spend the end of the afternoon looking down on the view—that is, if it did not disturb the service? The head waiter, bowing over her gratuity, assured her that the ladies were most welcome, and would be still more

anniversaries illnesses—the tame chronicle of an estimable pair. Little of it escaped Mrs Slade. But she had grown bored with it by the time her husband made his big *coup* in Wall Street and when they bought in upper Park Avenue had already begun to think. I'd rather live opposite a speak easy for a change, at least one might see it raided. The idea of seeing Grace raided was so amusing that (before the move) she launched it at a woman's lunch. It made a hit, and went the rounds—she sometimes wondered if it had crossed the street, and reached Mrs Ansley. She hoped not but didn't much mind. Those were the days when respectability was at a discount, and it did the irreproachable no harm to laugh at them a little.

A few years later, and not many months apart, both ladies lost their husbands. There was an appropriate exchange of wreaths and condolences, and a brief renewal of intimacy in the half-shadow of their mourning and now, after another interval, they had run across each other in Rome, at the same hotel, each of them the modest appendage of a salient daughter. The similarity of their lot had again drawn them together, lending itself to mild jokes, and the mutual confession that, if in old days it must have been tiring to keep up with daughters, it was now, at times, a little dull not to.

No doubt, Mrs Slade reflected, she felt her unemployment more than poor Grace ever would. It was a big drop from being the wife of Delphin Slade to being his widow. She had always regarded herself (with a certain conjugal pride) as his equal in social gifts, as contributing her full share to the making of the exceptional couple they were but the difference after his death was irremediable. As the wife of the famous corporation lawyer, always with an international case or two on hand, every day brought its exciting and unexpected obligation—the impromptu entertaining of eminent colleagues from abroad, the hurried dashes on legal business to London, Paris or Rome, where the entertaining was so handsomely reciprocated, the amusement of hearing in her wake. What, that handsome woman with the good clothes and the eyes is Mrs Slade—the Slade's wife? Really? Generally the wives of celebrities are such frumps.

Yes, being *the* Slade's widow was a dullish business after that. In living up to such a husband all her faculties had been engaged,

now she had only her daughter to live up to, for the son who seemed to have inherited his father's gifts had died suddenly in boyhood. She had fought through that agony because her husband was there, to be helped and to help, now, after the father's death, the thought of the boy had become unbearable. There was nothing left but to mother her daughter, and dear Jenny was such a perfect daughter that she needed no excessive mothering.

Now with Babs Ansley I don't know that I *should* be so quiet, Mrs. Slade sometimes half enviously reflected, but Jenny, who was younger than her brilliant friend, was that rare accident, an extremely pretty girl who somehow made youth and prettiness seem as safe as their absence. It was all perplexing—and to Mrs. Slade a little boring. She wished that Jenny would fall in love—with the wrong man, even, that she might have to be watched, outmanoeuvred, rescued. And instead, it was Jenny who watched her mother, kept her out of draughts, made sure that she had taken her tonic.

Mrs. Ansley was much less articulate than her friend, and her mental portrait of Mrs. Slade was slighter, and drawn with fainter touches. Alida Slade's awfully brilliant, but not as brilliant as she thinks, would have summed it up, though she would have added, for the enlightenment of strangers, that Mrs. Slade had been an extremely dashing girl, much more so than her daughter, who was pretty, of course, and clever in a way, but had none of her mother's—well, vividness, some one had once called it. Mrs. Ansley would take up current words like this, and cite them in quotation marks, as unheard of audacities. No, Jenny was not like her mother. Sometimes Mrs. Ansley thought Alida Slade was disappointed, on the whole she had had a sad life. Full of failures and mistakes, Mrs. Ansley had always been rather sorry for her.

So these two ladies visualized each other, each through the wrong end of her little telescope.

II

For a long time they continued to sit side by side without speaking. It seemed as though, to both, there was a relief in laying down

their somewhat futile activities in the presence of the vast Memento Mori which faced them Mrs Slade sat quite still, her eyes fixed on the golden slope of the Palace of the Cæsars, and after a while Mrs Ansley ceased to fidget with her bag, and she too sank into meditation Like many intimate friends, the two ladies had never before had occasion to be silent together, and Mrs Ansley was slightly embarrassed by what seemed, after so many years, a new stage in their intimacy, and one with which she did not yet know how to deal

Suddenly the air was full of that deep clangour of bells which periodically covers Rome with a roof of silver Mrs Slade glanced at her wrist watch Five o'clock already, she said, as though surprised

Mrs Ansley suggested interrogatively There's bridge at the Embassy at five For a long time Mrs Slade did not answer She appeared to be lost in contemplation, and Mrs Ansley thought the remark had escaped her But after a while she said, as if speaking out of a dream Bridge, did you say? Not unless you want to But I don't think I will, you know

Oh no, Mrs Ansley hastened to assure her I don't care to at all It's so lovely here and so full of old memories, as you say She settled herself in her chair, and almost furtively drew forth her knitting Mrs Slade took sideway note of this activity, but her own beautifully cared for hands remained motionless on her knee

I was just thinking,' she said slowly, what different things Rome stands for to each generation of travellers To our grandmothers, Roman fever, to our mothers, sentimental dangers—how we used to be guarded!—to our daughters, no more dangers than the middle of Main Street They don't know it—but how much they're missing!

The long golden light was beginning to pale, and Mrs Ansley lifted her knitting a little closer to her eyes Yes, how we were guarded!

I always used to think, Mrs Slade continued, that our mothers had a much more difficult job than our grandmothers When Roman fever stalked the streets it must have been comparatively easy to gather in the girls at the danger hour, but when

you and I were young, with such beauty calling us, and the spice of disobedience thrown in, and no worse risk than catching cold during the cool hour after sunset, the mothers used to be put to it to keep us in—didn't they?

She turned again toward Mrs Ansley, but the latter had reached a delicate point in her knitting. One, two, three—slip two, yes, they must have been, she assented, without looking up.

Mrs Slade's eyes rested on her with a deepened attention. She can knit—in the face of *thus*! How like her.

Mrs Slade leaned back, brooding, her eyes ranging from the runs which faced her to the long green hollow of the Forum, the fading glow of the church fronts beyond it, and the outlying immensity of the Colosseum. Suddenly she thought. It's all very well to say that our girls have done away with sentiment and moonlight. But if Babs Ansley isn't out to catch that young aviator—the one who's a Marchese—then I don't know anything. And Jenny has no chance beside her. I know that too. I wonder if that's why Grace Ansley likes the two girls to go everywhere together? My poor Jenny as a foil! Mrs Slade gave a hardly audible laugh, and at the sound Mrs Ansley dropped her knitting. 'Yes—?

I—oh, nothing. I was only thinking how your Babs carries everything before her. That Campolieri boy is one of the best matches in Rome. Don't look so innocent, my dear—you know he is. And I was wondering, ever so respectfully, you understand, wondering how two such exemplary characters as you and Horace had managed to produce anything quite so dynamic. Mrs Slade laughed again, with a touch of asperity.

Mrs Ansley's hands lay inert across her needles. She looked straight out at the great accumulated wreckage of passion and splendour at her feet. But her small profile was almost expressionless. At length she said. I think you overrate Babs, my dear.

Mrs Slade's tone grew easier. No, I don't. I appreciate her. And perhaps envy you. Oh, my girls perfect, if I were a chronic invalid. I'd—well, I think I'd rather be in Jenny's hands. There must be times—but there! I always wanted a brilliant daugh-

ter and never quite understood why I got an angel instead

Mrs Ansley echoed her laugh in a faint murmur Babs is an angel too

Of course—of course! But she's got rainbow wings Well, they're wandering by the sea with their young men and here we sit and it all brings back the past a little too acutely

Mrs Ansley had resumed her knitting One might almost have imagined (if one had known her less well, Mrs Slade reflected) that for her also, too many memories rose from the lengthening shadows of those august ruins But no, she was simply absorbed in her work What was there for her to worry about? She knew that Babs would almost certainly come back engaged to the extremely eligible Campohen And she'll sell the New York house and settle down near them in Rome, and never be in their way she's much too tactful But she'll have an excellent cook, and just the right people in for bridge and cocktails and a perfectly peaceful old age among her grandchildren

Mrs Slade broke off this prophetic flight with a recoil of self-disgust There was no one of whom she had less right to think unkindly than of Grace Ansley Would she never cure herself of envying her? Perhaps she had begun too long ago

She stood up and leaned against the parapet, filling her troubled eyes with the tranquillizing magic of the hour But instead of tranquillizing her the sight seemed to increase her exasperation Her gaze turned toward the Colosseum Already its golden flank was drowned in purple shadow, and above it the sky curved crystal clear, without light or colour It was the moment when afternoon and evening hang balanced in mid heaven

Mrs Slade turned back and laid her hand on her friend's arm The gesture was so abrupt that Mrs Ansley looked up, startled

The sun's set You're not afraid, my dear?

Afraid—?

Of Roman fever or pneumonia? I remember how ill you were that winter As a girl you had a very delicate throat hadn't you?

Oh, we're all right up here Down below, in the Forum, it does get deathly cold all of a sudden but not here

'Ah, of course you know because you had to be so careful' Mrs Slade turned back to the parapet. She thought I must make one more effort not to hate her. Aloud she said: 'Whenever I look at the Forum from up here, I remember that story about a great aunt of yours, wasn't she? A dreadfully wicked great aunt?'

Oh, yes, Great aunt Harriet. The one who was supposed to have sent her young sister out to the Forum after sunset to gather a night blooming flower for her album. All our great aunts and grandmothers used to have albums of dried flowers.

Mrs Slade nodded. But she really sent her because they were in love with the same man——

Well, that was the family tradition. They said Aunt Harriet confessed it years afterward. At any rate, the poor little sister caught the fever and died. Mother used to frighten us with the story when we were children.

'And you frightened *me* with it, that winter when you and I were here as girls. The winter I was engaged to Delphin.

Mrs Ansley gave a faint laugh. 'Oh, did I? Really frightened you? I don't believe you're easily frightened.'

Not often, but I was then. I was easily frightened because I was too happy. I wonder if you know what that means?

I—yes. Mrs Ansley faltered.

Well, I suppose that was why the story of your wicked aunt made such an impression on me. And I thought: 'There's no more Roman fever, but the Forum is deathly cold after sunset—especially after a hot day. And the Colosseum's even colder and damper.'

The Colosseum——?'

Yes. It wasn't easy to get in, after the gates were locked for the night. Far from easy. Still, in those days it could be managed, it *was* managed often. Lovers met there who couldn't meet else where. You knew that?

I—I daresay. I don't remember."

You don't remember? You don't remember going to visit some ruins or other one evening, just after dark, and catching a bad chill? You were supposed to have gone to see the moon rise. People always said that expedition was what caused your illness.

There was a moment's silence, then Mrs Ansley rejoined Did they? It was all so long ago

Yes And you got well again—so it didn't matter But I suppose it struck your friends—the reason given for your illness I mean—because everybody knew you were so prudent on account of your throat, and your mother took such care of you You *had* been out late sight seeing hadn't you that night?

Perhaps I had The most prudent girls aren't always prudent What made you think of it now?

Mrs Slade seemed to have no answer ready But after a moment she broke out Because I simply can't bear it any longer—!

Mrs Ansley lifted her head quickly Her eyes were wide and very pale Can't bear what?

Why—your not knowing that I've always known why you went

Why I went—?

Yes You think I'm bluffing, don't you? Well, you went to meet the man I was engaged to—and I can repeat every word of the letter that took you there

While Mrs Slade spoke Mrs Ansley had risen unsteadily to her feet Her bag, her knitting and gloves slid in a panic stricken heap to the ground She looked at Mrs Slade as though she were looking at a ghost

No, no—don't, she faltered out

Why not? Listen, if you don't believe me My one darling thing's can't go on like this I must see you alone Come to the Colosseum immediately after dark tomorrow There will be some body to let you in No one whom you need fear will suspect—but perhaps you've forgotten what the letter said?

Mrs Ansley met the challenge with an unexpected composure Steadying herself against the chair she looked at her friend, and replied No, I know it by heart too

And the signature? Only *your* D S Was that it? I'm right, am I? That was the letter that took you out that evening after dark?

Mrs Ansley was still looking at her It seemed to Mrs Slade that a slow struggle was going on behind the voluntarily controlled mask of her small quiet face I shouldn't have thought she

f so well in hand," Mrs Slade reflected, almost resent at this moment Mrs Ansley spoke I don't know how I burnt that letter at once'

ou would, naturally—you're so prudent! The sneer was

And if you burnt the letter you're wondering how on now what was in it That's it, isn't it?

ade waited, but Mrs Ansley did not speak

my dear, I know what was in that letter because I wrote

wrote it?'

wo women stood for a minute staring at each other in the

len light Then Mrs Ansley dropped back into her chan

, he murmured, and covered her face with her hands

Mrs Slade waited nervously for another word or movement

ne came, and at length she broke out I horrify you

Mrs Ansley's hands dropped to her knee The face they un covered was streaked with tears I wasn't thinking of you I was thinking—it was the only letter I ever had from him!

And I wrote it Yes, I wrote it! But I was the girl he was engaged to Did you happen to remember that?

Mrs Ansley's head drooped again I'm not trying to excuse myself I remembered

And still you went?

'Still I went

Mrs Slade stood looking down on the small bowed figure at her side The flame of her wrath had already sunk and she wondered why she had ever thought there would be any satisfaction in inflicting so purposeless a wound on her friend But she had to justify herself

You do understand? I'd found out—and I hated you, hated you I knew you were in love with Delphin—and I was afraid, afraid of you, of your quiet ways, your sweetness your well, I wanted you out of the way, that's all Just for a few weeks, just till I was sure of him So in a blind fury I wrote that letter I don't know why I'm telling you now

'I suppose, said Mrs Ansley slowly, it's because you've always gone on hating me'

"Perhaps Or because I wanted to get the whole thing off my mind She paused I'm glad you destroyed the letter Of course I never thought you'd die

Mrs Ansley relapsed into silence, and Mrs Slade, leaning above her, was conscious of a strange sense of isolation, of being cut off from the warm current of human communion You think me a monster!

I don't know It was the only letter I had, and you say he didn't write it?

Ah, how you care for him still!

I cared for that memory, said Mrs Ansley

Mrs Slade continued to look down on her She seemed physically reduced by the blow—as if when she got up the wind might scatter her like a puff of dust Mrs Slade's jealousy suddenly leapt up again at the sight All these years the woman had been living on that letter How she must have loved him to treasure the mere memory of its ashes! The letter of the man her friend was engaged to Wasn't it she who was the monster?

You tried your best to get him away from me, didn't you? But you failed, and I kept him That's all

Yes That's all

I wish now I hadn't told you I'd no idea you'd feel about it as you do, I thought you'd be amused It all happened so long ago as you say, and you must do me the justice to remember that I had no reason to think you'd ever taken it seriously How could I, when you were married to Horace Ansley two months afterward? As soon as you could get out of bed your mother rushed you off to Florence and married you People were rather surprised—they wondered at its being done so quickly, but I thought I knew I had an idea you did it out of *pique*—to be able to say you'd got ahead of Delphin and me Girls have such silly reasons for doing the most serious things And your marrying so soon convinced me that you'd never really cared

Yes I suppose it would, Mrs Ansley assented

The clear heaven overhead was emptied of all its gold Dusk spread over it abruptly darkening the Seven Hills Here and there lights began to twinkle through the foliage at their feet Steps were coming and going on the deserted terrace—waiters looking out of

the doorway at the head of the stairs, then reappearing with trays and napkins and flasks of wine. Tables were moved, chairs straightened. A feeble string of electric lights flickered out. Some vases of faded flowers were carried away, and brought back replenished. A stout lady in a dust coat suddenly appeared, asking in broken Italian if any one had seen the elastic band which held together her tattered Baedeker. She poked with her stick under the table at which she had lunched, the waiters assisting.

The corner where Mrs. Slade and Mrs. Ansley sat was still shadowy and deserted. For a long time neither of them spoke. At length Mrs. Slade began again: "I suppose I did it as a sort of joke——"

A joke?"

Well, girls are ferocious sometimes, you know. Girls in love especially. And I remember laughing to myself all that evening at the idea that you were waiting around there in the dark, dodging out of sight, listening for every sound, trying to get in— Of course I was upset when I heard you were so ill afterward.

Mrs. Ansley had not moved for a long time. But now she turned slowly toward her companion. But I didn't wait. He'd arranged everything. He was there. We were let in at once, she said.

Mrs. Slade sprang up from her leaning position. Delphin there? They let you in?— Ah, now you're lying! she burst out with violence.

Mrs. Ansley's voice grew clearer, and full of surprise. But of course he was there. Naturally he came——

Came? How did he know he'd find you there? You must be raving!

Mrs. Ansley hesitated, as though reflecting. But I answered the letter. I told him I'd be there. So he came.

Mrs. Slade flung her hands up to her face. Oh, God—you answered! I never thought of your answering.

It's odd you never thought of it, if you wrote the letter."

Yes. I was blind with rage.

Mrs. Ansley rose, and drew her fur scarf about her. 'It is cold here. We'd better go. I'm sorry for you,' she said, as she clasped the fur about her throat.

The unexpected words sent a pang through Mrs. Slade. "Yes,

we'd better go' She gathered up her bag and cloak. I don't know why you should be sorry for me, she muttered.

Mrs. Ansley stood looking away from her toward the dusky secret mass of the Colosseum. Well—because I didn't have to wait that night.

Mrs. Slade gave an unquiet laugh. Yes, I was beaten there. But I oughtn't to begrudge it to you, I suppose. At the end of all these years. After all, I had everything. I had him for twenty-five years. And you had nothing but that one letter that he didn't write.

Mrs. Ansley was again silent. At length she turned toward the door of the terrace. She took a step, and turned back, facing her companion.

I had Barbara, she said, and began to move ahead of Mrs. Slade toward the stairway.

RUTH SUCKOW



A Start in Life

The Switzers were scurrying around to get Daisy ready by the time that Elmer Kruse should get through in town. They had known all week that Elmer might be in for her any day. But they hadn't done a thing until he appeared. Oh, it was so rainy to day, the roads were so muddy, they hadn't thought he'd get in until maybe next week. It would have been the same any other day.

Mrs. Switzer was trying now at the last moment to get all of Daisy's things into the battered telescope that lay open on the bed. The bed had not got made, and just as soon as Daisy was gone, Mrs. Switzer would have to hurry off to the Woodworths where she was to wash to day. Daisy's things were scattered over the dark brown quilt and the rumpled sheet that were dingy and clammy in this damp weather. So was the whole bedroom, with its sloping ceiling and old-fashioned square paned windows, the commode that they used for a dresser littered with pin tray, curlers, broken comb, ribbons, smoky lamp, all mixed up together, the door of the closet open, showing the confusion of clothes and shabby shoes. They all slept in this room—Mrs. Switzer and Dwight in the bed, the two guls in the cot against the wall.

Mamma, I can't find the belt to that plaid dress '.

Oh, ain't it somewheres around? Well, I guess you'll have to let it go. If I come across it I can send it out to you. Some one'll be going past there.

She had meant to get Daisy all mended and fixed up before she went out to the country. But somehow oh, there was always so much to see to when she came home. Gone all

day, washing and cleaning for other people it didn't leave her much time for her own house

She was late now. The Woodworths liked to have her get the washing out early so that she could do some cleaning too before she left. But she couldn't help it. She would have to get Daisy off first. She had already had on her wraps ready to go when Elmer came—her cleaning cap, of a blue faded almost into grey, and the ancient black coat with gathered sleeves that she wore over her work dress when she went out to wash.

What's become of all your underclothes? They ain't all dirty, are they?

They are, too. You didn't wash for us last week, mamma.

Well, you'll just have to take along what you've got. Maybe there'll be some way of getting the rest to you.

Elmers come in every week, don't they? Daisy demanded.

Yes, but maybe they won't always be bringing you in.

She jammed what she could into the telescope, thinking with her helpless, anxious fatalism that it would have to do somehow.

Daisy, you get yourself ready now.

I am ready, Mamma, I want to put on my other ribbon.

Oh, that's way down in the telescope somewhere. You needn't be so anxious to fix yourself up. This ain't like going visiting.

Daisy stood at the little mirror preening herself—such a homely child, all Switzer, skinny, with pale sharp eyes set close together and thin, stungy, reddish hair. But she had never really learned yet how homely she was. She was the oldest, and she got the pick of what clothes were given to the Switzers. Goldie and Dwight envied her. She was important in her small world. She was proud of her blue coat that had belonged to Alice Brooker, the town lawyer's daughter. It hung unevenly about her bony little knees and the buttons came down too far. Her mother had tried to make it over for her.

Mrs. Switzer looked at her, troubled, but not knowing how she could tell her all the things she ought to be told. Daisy had never been away before except to go to her Uncle Fred's at Lehigh. She seemed to think that this would be the same. She had so many things to learn. Well, she would find them out soon enough—only too soon. Working for other people—she

would learn what that meant Elmer and Edna Kruse were nice young people They would mean well enough by Daisy It was a good chance for her to start in But it wasn't the same

Daisy was so proud She thought it was quite a thing to be starting in to earn She thought she could buy herself so much with that dollar and a half a week The other children stood back watching her, round eyed and impressed They wished that they were going away, like Daisy

They heard a car come splashing through the mud in low

There he is back! Have you got your things on? Goldie—go out and tell him she's coming

No, me tell him, me! Dwight shouted jealously

'Well—both of you tell him Land'

She tried hastily to put on the cover of the bulging telescope and to fasten the straps One of them broke

Well, you'll have to take it the way it is

It was an old thing, hadn't been used since her husband, Mert, had left off canvassing before he died And he had worn it all to pieces

Well I guess you'll have to go now He won't want to wait I'll try and send you out what you ain't got with you She turned to Daisy Her face was working There was nothing else to do, as everyone said Daisy would have to help, and she might as well learn it now Only she hated to see Daisy go off, to have her starting in She knew what it meant Well—you try and work good this summer, so they'll want you to stay I hope they'll bring you in sometimes

Daisy's homely little face grew pale with awe, suddenly, at the sight of her mother crying at something that she dimly sensed in the pressure of her mother's thin strong arms Her vanity in her new importance was somehow shamed and dampened

Elmer's big new Buick mud splashed but imposing, stood tilted on the uneven road Mud was thick on the wheels It was a bad day for driving, with the roads a yellow mass, water lying in all the wheel ruts This little road that led past these few houses on the outskirts of town, and up over the hill had a cold rainy loneliness Elmer sat in the front seat of the Buick, and in the back was a big box of groceries

Got room to sit in there? he asked genially I didn't get out, it's so muddy here!

No, don't get out, Mrs Switzer said hastily She can put this right on the floor there in the back She added, with a timid attempt at courtesy, Ain't the roads pretty bad out that way?

Yes but farmers get so they don't think so much about the roads

I s pose that s so

He saw the signs of tears on Mrs Switzer's face and they made him anxious to get away She embraced Daisy hastily again Daisy climbed over the grocery box and scrunched herself into the seat

'I guess you'll bring her in with you some time when you're coming, Mrs Switzer hinted

Sure We'll bring her

He started the engine It roared, half died down as the wheels of the car spun in the thick wet mud

In that moment, Daisy had a startled view of home—the small house standing on a rough rise of land, weathered to a dim colour that showed dark streaks from the rain, the narrow sloping front porch whose edge had a soaked gnawed look the chickens, greyish black, pecking at the wet ground then playthings, stones a wagon, some old pail covers littered about, a soaked, discoloured piece of underwear hanging on the line in the back yard The yard was tussocky and overhung the road with shaggy long grass where the yellow bank was caved in under it Goldie and Dwight were gazing at her solemnly She saw her mother's face—a thin, weak, loving face, drawn with neglected weeping, with its reddened eyes and poor teeth in the old coat and heavy shoes and cleaning cap, her work worn hand with its big knuckles clutching at her coat She saw the playthings they had used yesterday, and the old swing that hung from one of the trees, the ropes sodden, the seat in crooked

The car went off, slipping on the wet clay She waved frantically, suddenly understanding that she was leaving them They waved at her

Mrs Switzer stood there a little while Then came the harsh

rasp of the old black iron pump that stood out under the box elder tree. She was pumping water to leave for the children before she went off to work.

II

Daisy held on as the car skidded going down the short clay hill. Elmer didn't bother with chains. He was too used to the roads. But her eyes brightened with scared excitement. When they were down, and Elmer slowed up going along the tracks in the deep wet grass that led to the main road, she looked back, holding on her hat with her small scrawny hand.

Just down this little hill—and home was gone. The big car, the feel of her telescope under her feet, the fact that she was going out to the country, changed the looks of everything. She saw it all now.

Dunkels' house stood on one side of the road. A closed up white house. The windows stared blank and cold between the old shutters. There was a chair with a broken straw seat under the fruit trees. The Dunkels were old Catholic people who seldom went anywhere. In the front yard was a clump of tall pines, the rough brown trunks wet, the green branches, dark and shining, heavy with rain, the ground underneath mournfully sodden and black.

The pasture on the other side. The green grass, lush, wet and cold, and the outcroppings of limestone that held little pools of rain water in all the tiny holes. Beyond, the low hills gloomy with timber against the lowering sky.

They slid out on to the main road. They bumped over the small wooden bridge above the swollen creek that came from the pasture. Daisy looked down. She saw the little swirls of foam, the long grass that swished with the water, the old rusted tin cans lodged between the rocks.

She sat up straight and important, her thin, homely little face strained with excitement, her sharp eyes taking in everything. The watery mudholes in the road, the little thickets of plum-trees, low and wet, in dark interlacings. She held on fiercely, but made no sound when the car skidded.

She felt the grandeur of having a ride. One wet Sunday,

Mr Brooker had driven them all home from church, she and Goldie and Dwight packed tightly into the back seat of the car, shut in by the side curtains against which the rain lashed, catching the muddy scent of the roads. Sometimes they could plan to go to town just when Mr Pattey was going to work in his Ford. Then they would run out and shout eagerly. Mr Pattey! Are you going through town? Sometimes he didn't hear them. Sometimes he said, with curt good nature. Well, pile in, and they all hopped into the truck back. He says we can go along with him.

She looked at the black wet fields through which little leaves of bright green corn grew in rows, at showery bushes of sumach along the roadside. A gasoline engine pumping water made a loud desolate sound. There were somber looking cattle in the wet grass, and lonely thick foliaged trees growing here and there in the pastures. She felt her telescope on the floor of the car, the box of groceries beside her. She eyed these with a sharp curiosity. There was a fresh pine apple—something the Switzers didn't often get at home. She wondered if Edna would have it for dinner. Maybe she could hint a little to Edna.

She was out in the country. She could no longer see her house even if she wanted to—standing dingy, streaked with rain, in its rough grass on the little hill. A lump came into her throat. She had looked forward to playing with Edna's children. But Goldie and Dwight would play all morning without her. She was still proud of her being the oldest, of going out with Elmer and Edna, but now there was a forlornness in the pride.

She wished she were in the front seat with Elmer. She didn't see why he hadn't put her there. She would have liked to know who all the people were who lived on these farms, how old Elmer's babies were, and if he and Edna always went to the movies when they went into town on Saturday nights. Elmer must have lots of money to buy a car like this. He had a new house on his farm, too, and Mrs Metzinger had said that it had plumbing. Maybe they would take her to the movies, too. She might hint about that.

When she had gone to visit Uncle Fred, she had had to go on the train. She liked this better. She hoped they had a long way to go. She called out to Elmer.

'Say, how much farther is your place?'

What's that? He turned around Oh, just down the road a ways Scared to drive in the mud?

No, I ain't scared I like to drive most any way

She looked at Elmer's back the old felt hat crammed down carelessly on his head, the back of his neck with the golden hair on the sunburned skin above the blue of his shirt collar Strong and easy and slouched a little over the steering wheel that he handled so masterfully Elmer and Edna were just young folks, but Mrs Metzinger said that they had more to start with than most young farmers did, and that they were hustlers Daisy felt that the pride of this belonged to her too, now

Here we are!

Oh, is this where you folks live? Daisy cried eagerly

The house stood back from the road beyond a space of bare yard with a little scattering of grass just starting—small, modern, painted a bright new white and yellow The barn was new too, a big splendid barn of frescoed brick, with a silo of the same There were no trees A raw desolate wind blew across the back yard as they drove up beside the back door

Edna had come out on the step Elmer grinned at her as he took out the box of groceries and she slightly raised her eye brows She said kindly enough

Well, you brought Daisy Hello, Daisy, are you going to stay with us this summer?

I guess so, Daisy said importantly But she suddenly felt a little shy and forlorn as she got out of the car and stood on the bare ground in the chilly wind

Yes, I brought her along, Elmer said

Are the roads very bad?

Kind of bad Why?

Well, I'd like to get over to mamma's some time to-day'

Oh, I guess they aren't too bad for that

Daisy picked up her sharp little ears Another ride That cheered her

Look in the door, Edna said in a low fond voice, motioning with her head

Two little round, blond heads were pressed tightly against

the screen door There was a clamour of Daddy daddy! Elmer grinned with a half bashful pride as he stood with the box of groceries, raising his eyebrows with mock surprise and demanding Who's this? What you shoutin' daddy for? You don't think daddy's got anything for you, do you? He and Edna were going into the kitchen together, until Edna remembered and called back hastily

Oh, come in, Daisy!

Daisy stood, a little left out and solitary there in the kitchen, as Billy, the older of the babies, climbed frantically over Elmer, demanding candy, and the little one toddled smilingly about Her eyes took in all of it She was impressed by the shining blue and-white linoleum, the range with its nickel and enamel, the bright new woodwork Edna was laughing and scolding at Elmer and the baby Billy had made his father produce the candy Daisy's sharp little eyes looked hungrily at the lemon drops until Edna remembered her

Give Daisy a piece of your candy, she said

He would not go up to Daisy She had to come forward and take one of the lemon drops herself She saw where Edna put the sack, in a dish high in the cupboard She hoped they would get some more before long

My telescope's out there in the car she reminded them

Oh! Elmer, you go and get it and take it up for her, Edna said

What?

Her valise—or whatever it is—out in the car

Oh, sure, Elmer said with a cheerful grin

It's kind of an old telescope, Daisy said conversationally I guess it's been used a lot My papa used to have it The strap broke when mamma was fastening it this morning We ain't got any suitcase I had to take this because it was all there was in the house, and mamma didn't want to get me a new one

Edna raised her eyebrows politely She leaned over and pretended to spat the baby as he came toddling up to her, then rubbed her cheek against his round head with its funny fuzz of hair

Daisy watched solemnly I didn't know both of your children

was boys I thought one of em was a girl That's what there is at home now—one boy and one girl

Um hm, Edna replied absently You can go up with Elmer and take off your things Daisy, she said You can stop and unpack your valise now, I guess, if you'd like to Then you can come down and help me in the kitchen You know we got you to help me she reminded

Daisy, subdued, followed Elmer up the bright new stairs In the upper hall, two strips of very clean rag rug were laid over the shining yellow of the floor Elmer had put her telescope in one of the bedrooms

'There you are!'

She heard him go clattering down the stairs, and then a kind of murmuring and laughing in the kitchen The back door slammed She hurried to the window in time to see Elmer going off toward the barn

She looked about her room with intense curiosity It too had a bright varnished floor She had a bed all of her own—a small old fashioned bed, left from some old furnishings, that had been put in this room that had the pipes and the hot-water tank She had to see everything, but she had a stealthy look as she tiptoed about, started to open the drawers of the dresser, looked out of her window She put her coat and hat on the bed She would rather be down in the kitchen with Edna than unpack her telescope now

She guessed she would go down where the rest of them were

III

Elmer came into the house for dinner He brought in a cold, muddy, outdoor breath with him The range was going, but the bright little kitchen seemed chilly, with the white oilcloth on the table, the baby's varnished high chair and his little fat, mottled hands

Edna made a significant little face at Elmer Daisy did not see She was standing back from the stove, where Edna was at work, looking at the baby

He can talk pretty good, can't he? Dwight couldn't say anything but mamma when he was that little

Edna's back was turned. She said meaningly

Now, Elmer's come in to dinner, Daisy, we'll have to hurry. You must help me get on the dinner. You can cut bread and get things on the table. You must help, you know. That's what you are supposed to do.

Daisy looked startled, a little scared and resentful. Well, I don't know where you keep your bread.

Don't you remember where I told you to put it this morning? Right over in the cabinet, in that big box. You must watch, Daisy, and learn where things are.

Elmer, a little embarrassed at the look that Edna gave him, whistled as he began to wash his hands at the sink.

How's daddy's old boy? he said loudly, giving a poke at the baby's chin.

As Edna passed him, she shook her head, and her lips just formed. Been like that all morning!

He grinned comprehendingly. Then both their faces became expressionless.

Daisy had not exactly heard, but she looked from one to the other, silent and dimly wondering. The queer ache that had kept starting all through the morning under her interest in Edna's things and doings, came over her again. She sensed something different in the atmosphere than she had ever known before—some queer difference between the position of herself and of the two babies, a faint notion of what mamma had meant when she had said that this would not be visiting.

I guess I'm going to have the toothache again, she said faintly.

No one seemed to hear her.

Edna whisked off the potatoes, drained the water. You might bring me a dish, Daisy. Daisy searched a long time while Edna turned impatiently and pointed. Edna put the rest of the things on the table herself. Her young, fresh, capable mouth was tightly closed, and she was making certain resolutions.

Daisy stood hesitating in the middle of the room, a scrawny

unappealing little figure Billy—fat blond, in funny, dark blue unionalls—was trotting busily about the kitchen Daisy swooped down upon him and tried to bring him to the table He set up a howl Edna turned, looked astonished, severe

I was trying to make him come to the table,' Daisy explained weakly

You scared him He isn't used to you He doesn't like it Don't cry, Billy The girl didn't mean anything

Here daddy'll put him in his place Elmer said hastily

Billy looked over his father's shoulder at Daisy with suffused, resentful blue eyes She did not understand it, and felt strangely at a loss She had been left with Goldie and Dwight so often She had always made Dwight go to the table She had been the boss

Edna said in a cool, held-in voice, Put these things on the table, Daisy

They sat down Daisy and the other children had always felt it a great treat to eat away from home instead of at their own scanty, hastily set table They had hung around Mrs Metzinger's house at noon, hoping to be asked to stay, not offended when told that it was time for them to run off now Her pinched little face had a hungry look as she stared at the potatoes and fried ham and pie But they did not watch and urge her to have more as Mrs Metzinger did, and Mrs Brooker when she took pity on the Switzers and had them there Daisy wanted more pie But none of them seemed to be taking more, and so she said nothing She remembered what her mother had said, with now a faint comprehension You must remember you're out working for other folks, and it won't be like it is at home

After dinner, Edna said Now you can wash the dishes, Daisy

She went into the next room with the children Daisy, as she went hesitatingly about the kitchen alone, could hear Edna's low contented humming as she sat in there rocking, the baby in her lap The bright kitchen was empty and lonely now Through the window, Daisy could see the great barn looming up against the rainy sky She hoped that they would drive to Edna's mother's soon

She finished as soon as she could, and went into the dining room, where Edna was sewing on the baby's rompers. Edna went on sewing. Daisy sat down disconsolately. That queer low ache went all through her. She said in a small dismal voice:

I guess I got the toothache again.

Edna bit off a thread.

I had it awful hard a while ago. Mamma come pretty near taking me to the dentist.

That's too bad, Edna murmured politely. But she offered no other condolence. She gave a secret little smile at the baby asleep on a blanket and a pillow in one corner of the shiny leather davenport.

Is Elmer going to drive into town to-morrow?

To-morrow? I don't suppose so.

'Mamma couldn't find the belt of my plaid dress and I thought if he was, maybe I could go along and get it. I'd like to have it.'

Daisy's homely mouth drooped at the corners. Her toothache did not seem to matter to anyone. Edna did not seem to want to see that anything was wrong with her. She had expected Edna to be concerned, to mention remedies. But it wasn't a toothache, that strange lonesome ache all over her. Maybe she was going to be terribly sick. Mamma wouldn't come home for supper to be told about it.

She saw mamma's face as in that last glimpse of it—drawn with crying, and yet trying to smile, under the old cleaning cap, her hand holding her coat together.

Edna glanced quickly at her. The child was so mortally unattractive, unappealing even in her forlornness. Edna frowned a little, but said kindly:

Now, you might take Billy into the kitchen out of my way, Daisy, and amuse him.

Well, he cries when I pick him up, Daisy said faintly.

He won't cry this time. Take him out and help him play with his blocks. You must help me with the children, you know.

Well, if he'll go with me.

He'll go with you, won't he, Billy boy? Won't you go with Daisy, sweetheart?

Billy stared and then nodded. Daisy felt a thrill of comfort.

as Billy put his little fat hand in hers and trotted into the kitchen beside her. He had the fattest hands, she thought. Edna brought the blocks and put the box down on the floor beside Daisy.

Now, see if you can amuse him so that I can get my sewing done.

Shall you and me play blocks, Billy? Daisy murmured.

He nodded. Then he got hold of the box with one hand, tipped out all the blocks on the floor with a bang and a rattle, and looked at her with a pleased proud smile.

'Oh, no, Billy. You mustn't spill out the blocks. Look, you're too little to play with them. No, now—now wait! Let Daisy show you. Daisy'll build something real nice—shall she?'

He gave a solemn nod of consent.

Daisy set out the blocks on the bright linoleum. She had never had such blocks as these to handle before. Dwight's were only a few old, unmatched, broken ones. Her spirit of leadership came back, and she firmly put away that fat hand of Billy's whenever he meddled with her building. She could make something really wonderful with these blocks.

No, Billy, you mustn't. See, when Daisy's got it all done, then you can see what the lovely building is.

She put the blocks together with great interest. She knew what she was going to make—it was going to be a new house, no, a new church. Just as she got the walls up, in came that little hand again, and then with a delighted grunt Billy swept the blocks pell mell about the floor. At the clatter, he sat back, pursing up his mouth to give an ecstatic Ooh!

Oh, Billy—you mustn't. The building wasn't done! Look, you've spoiled it. Now you've got to sit way off here while I try to build it over again.

Billy's look of triumph turned to surprise and then to vociferous protest as Daisy picked him up and firmly transplanted him to another corner of the room. He set up a tremendous howl. He had never been set aside like that before. Edna came hurrying out. Daisy looked at Edna for justification, but instinctively on the defensive.

Billy knocked over the blocks. He spoiled the building!'

Wah! Wah!' Billy gave loud heart-broken sobs. The tears ran

down his fat cheeks and he held out his arms piteously toward his mother

I didn't hurt him, Daisy said scared

Never mind, lover Edna was crooning Of course he can play with his blocks They're Billy's blocks, Daisy she said He doesn't like to sit and see you put up buildings He wants to play too See, you've made him cry now

Do wanna stay here, Billy wailed

Well, come in with mother then She picked him up wiping his tears

I didn't hurt him, Daisy protested

Well never mind now You can pick up the blocks and then sweep the floor Daisy You didn't do that when you finished the dishes Never mind she was saying to Billy Pretty soon daddy'll come in and we'll have a nice ride

Daisy soberly picked up the blocks and got the broom What had she done to Billy? He had tried to spoil her building She always made Dwight keep back until she had finished Of course it was Daisy, the oldest, who should lead and manage There had been no one to hear her side Everything was different She winked back tears as she swept poorly and carelessly

Then she brightened up as Elmer came tramping up on the back porch and then through the kitchen

Edna!

She's in there, Daisy offered

Want to go now? What! Is the baby asleep? he asked blankly

Edna gave him a warning look and the door was closed

Daisy listened hard She swept very softly She could catch only a little of what they said— Kind of hate to go off I know, but if we once start not a thing all day what we got her for She had no real comprehension of it She hurried and put away the broom She wanted to be sure and be ready to go

Elmer tramped out straight past her She saw from the window that he was backing the car out from the shed She could hear Edna and Billy upstairs, could hear the baby cry a little as he was wakened Maybe she ought to go out and get on her wraps, too

Elmer honked the horn A moment later Edna came hurrying

downstairs, in her hat and coat, and Billy in a knitted cap and red sweater crammed over his unionalls, so that he looked like a little Brownie. The baby had his little coat, too.

Edna called out. Come in and get this boy, daddy. She did not look at Daisy, but said hurriedly. We're going for a little ride, Daisy. Have you finished the sweeping? Well, then you can pick up those pieces in the dining-room. We won't be gone so very long. When it's a quarter past five, you start the fire, like I showed you this noon, and slice the potatoes that were left, and the meat. And set the table.

The horn was honked again.

Yes! Well, we'll be back, Daisy. Come, lover, daddy's in a hurry.

Daisy stood looking after them. Billy clamoured to sit beside his daddy. Edna took the baby from Elmer and put him beside her on the back seat. There was room—half of the big back seat. There wasn't anything really, to be done at home. That was the worst of it. They just didn't want to take her. They all belonged together. They didn't want to take anyone else along. She was an outsider. They all—even the baby—had a freshened look of expectancy.

The engine roared—they had started, slipping on the mud of the drive, then forging straight ahead, around the turn, out of sight.

IV

She went forlornly into the dining room. The light from the windows was dim now in the rainy, late afternoon. The pink pieces from the baby's rompers were scattered over the gay rug. She got down on her hands and knees, slowly picking them up, sniffing a little. She heard the Big Ben clock in the kitchen ticking loudly.

That dreadful ache submerged her. No one would ask about it, no one would try to comfort her. Before, there had always been mamma coming home, anxious, scolding sometimes, but worried over them if they didn't feel right, caring about them. Mamma and Goldie and Dwight cared about her—but she was

away out in the country, and they were at home She didnt want to stay here, where she didnt belong But mamma had told her that she must begin helping this summer

Her ugly little mouth contorted into a grimace of weeping But silent weeping, without any tears, because she already had the cold knowledge that no one would notice or comfort it

PAR LAGERKVIST



Father and I

I remember one Sunday afternoon when I was about ten years old, Daddy took my hand and we went for a walk in the woods to hear the birds sing. We waved good bye to mother, who was staying at home to prepare supper, and so couldn't go with us. The sun was bright and warm as we set out briskly on our way. We didn't take this bird singing too seriously, as though it was something special or unusual. We were sensible people, Daddy and I. We were used to the woods and the creatures in them, so we didn't make any fuss about it. It was just because it was Sunday afternoon and Daddy was free. We went along the railway line where other people aren't allowed to go, but Daddy belonged to the railway and had a right to. And in this way we came direct into the woods and did not need to take a round about way. Then the bird song and all the rest began at once. They chirped in the bushes, hedge sparrows, thrushes, and warblers, and we heard all the noises of the little creatures as we came into the woods. The ground was thick with anemones, the birches were dressed in their new leaves, and the pines had young, green shoots. There was such a pleasant smell everywhere. The mossy ground was steaming a little, because the sun was shining upon it. Everywhere there was life and noise. bumble bees flew out of their holes, midges circled where it was damp. The birds shot out of the bushes to catch them and then dived back again. All of a sudden a train came rushing along and we had to go down the embankment. Daddy hailed the driver with two fingers to his Sunday hat. the driver saluted and waved his hand. Everything seemed on the move. As we went on our way along the sleepers which lay and oozed tar in the sunshine, there was a

smell of everything machine oil and almond blossom, tar and heather, all mixed. We took big steps from sleeper to sleeper so as not to step among the stones which were rough to walk on, and wore your shoes out. The rails shone in the sunshine. On both sides of the line stood the telephone poles that sang as we went by them. Yes! That was a fine day! The sky was absolutely clear. There wasn't a single cloud to be seen there just couldn't be any on a day like this, according to what Daddy said. After a while we came to a field of oats on the right side of the line, where a farmer, whom we knew, had a clearing. The oats had grown thick and even, Daddy looked at it knowingly, and I could feel that he was satisfied. I didn't understand that sort of thing much, because I was born in town. Then we came to the bridge over the brook that mostly hadn't much water in it, but now there was plenty. We took hands so that we shouldn't fall down between the sleepers. From there it wasn't far to the railway gatekeeper's little place which was quite buried in green. There were apple trees and gooseberry bushes right close to the house. We went in there, to pay a visit and they offered us milk. We looked at the pigs, the hens and the fruit trees, which were in full blossom, and then we went on again. We wanted to go to the river because there it was prettier than anywhere else. There was something special about the river because higher up stream it flowed past Daddy's old home. We never liked going back before we got to it, and, as usual, this time we got there after a fair walk. It wasn't far to the next station, but we didn't go on there. Daddy just looked to see whether the signals were right. He thought of every thing. We stopped by the river, where it flowed broad and friendly in the sunshine, and the thick leafy trees on the banks mirrored themselves in the calm water. It was all so fresh and bright. A breeze came from the little lakes higher up. We climbed down the bank, went a little way along the very edge. Daddy showed me the fishing spots. When he was a boy he used to sit there on the stones and wait for perch all day long. Often he didn't get a single bite, but it was a delightful way to spend the day. Now he never had time. We played about for some time by the side of the river, and threw in pieces of bark that the current carried away, and we threw stones to see who could throw farthest. We

were, by nature, very merry and cheerful, Daddy and I. After a while we felt a bit tired. We thought we had played enough, so we started off home again.

Then it began to get dark. The woods were changed. It wasn't quite dark yet, but almost. We made haste. Maybe mother was getting anxious and waiting supper. She was always afraid that something might happen, though nothing had. This had been a splendid day. Everything had been just as it should, and we were satisfied with it all. It was getting darker and darker, and the trees were so queer. They stood and listened for the sound of our footsteps, as though they didn't know who we were. There was a glow-worm under one of them. It lay down there in the dark and stared at us. I held Daddy's hand tight, but he didn't seem to notice the strange light. He just went on. It was quite dark when we came to the bridge over the stream. It was roaring down underneath us as if it wanted to swallow us up, as the ground seemed to open under us. We went along the sleepers carefully holding hands tight so that we shouldn't fall in. I thought Daddy would carry me over, but he didn't say anything about it. I suppose he wanted me to be like him, and not think anything of it. We went on. Daddy was so calm in the darkness, walking with even steps without speaking. He was thinking his own thoughts. I couldn't understand how he could be so calm when everything was so ghostly. I looked round scared. It was nothing but darkness everywhere. I hardly dared to breathe deeply, because then the darkness comes into one, and that was dangerous. I thought, One must die soon. I remember quite well thinking so then. The railway embankment was very steep. It finished in black night. The telephone posts stood up ghostlike against the sky, mumbling deep inside as though someone were speaking, way down in the earth. The white china hats sat there scared, cowering with fear, listening. It was all so creepy. Nothing was real, nothing was natural, all seemed a mystery. I went closer to Daddy, and whispered, Why is it so creepy when it's dark?

No child, it isn't creepy, he said, and took my hand.

Oh, yes, but it is, Daddy.

No, you mustn't think that. We know there is a God don't we? I felt so lonely, so abandoned. It was queer that it was only me

that was frightened, and not Daddy. It was queer that we didn't feel the same about it. And it was queerer still that what he said didn't help. Didn't stop me being frightened. Not even what he said about God helped. The thought of God made one feel creepy too. It was creepy to think that He was everywhere here in the darkness, down there under the trees, and in the telephone posts that mumbled so—probably that was Him everywhere. But all the same one could never see Him.

We went along silently, each of us thinking his own thoughts. My heart felt cramped as though the darkness had come in and was squeezing it.

Then, when we were in a bend, we suddenly heard a great noise behind us. We were startled out of our thoughts. Daddy pulled me down the embankment and held me tight, and a train rushed by, a black train. The lights were out in all the carriages, as it whizzed past us. What could it be? There shouldn't be any train now. We looked at it, frightened. The furnace roared in the big engine, where they shovelled in coal, and the sparks flew out into the night. It was terrible. The driver stood so pale and immovable, with such a stony look in the glare. Daddy didn't recognize him—didn't know who he was. He was just looking ahead as though he was driving straight into darkness, far into darkness, which had no end.

Startled and panting with fear I looked after the wild thing. It was swallowed up in the night. Daddy helped me up on to the line, and we hurried home. He said, 'That was strange! What train was that? I wonder?' And I didn't know the driver either. Then he didn't say any more.

I was shaking all over. That had been for me—for my sake. I guessed what it meant. It was all the fear which would come to me, all the unknown, all that Daddy didn't know about, and couldn't save me from. That was how the world would be for me, and the strange life I should live, not like Daddy's, where everyone was known and sure. It wasn't a real world, or a real life,—it just rushed burning into the darkness which had no end.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY



Now I Lay Me

That night we lay on the floor in the room and I listened to the silk worms eating. The silk-worms fed in racks of mulberry leaves and all night you could hear them eating and a dropping sound in the leaves. I myself did not want to sleep because I had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way for a long time, ever since I had been blown up at night and felt it go out of me and go off and then come back. I tried never to think about it, but it had started to go since, in the nights, just at the moment of going off to sleep, and I could only stop it by a very great effort. So while now I am fairly sure that it would not really have gone out, yet then that summer, I was unwilling to make the experiment.

I had different ways of occupying myself while I lay awake. I would think of a trout stream I had fished along when I was a boy and fish its whole length very carefully in my mind, fishing very carefully under all the logs, all the turns of the bank, the deep holes and the clear shallow stretches, sometimes catching trout and sometimes losing them. I would stop fishing at noon to eat my lunch, sometimes on a log over the stream, sometimes on a high bank under a tree, and I always ate my lunch very slowly and watched the stream below me while I ate. Often I ran out of bait because I would take only ten worms with me in a tobacco tin when I started. When I had used them all I had to find more worms, and sometimes it was very difficult digging in the bank of the stream where the cedar trees kept out the sun and there was no grass but only the bare moist earth and often I could find no worms. Always though I found some kind of bait.

but one time in the swamp I could find no bait at all and had to cut up one of the trout I had caught and use him for bait

Sometimes I found insects in the swamp meadows in the grass or under ferns, and used them. There were beetles and insects with legs like grass stems and grubs in old rotten logs, white grubs with brown pinching heads that would not stay on the hook and emptied into nothing in the cold water, and wood ticks under logs where sometimes I found angle worms that slipped into the ground as soon as the log was raised. Once I used a salamander from under an old log. The salamander was very small and neat and agile and a lovely color. He had tiny feet that tried to hold on to the hook and after that one time I never used a salamander, although I found them very often. Nor did I use crickets, because of the way they acted about the hook.

Sometimes the stream ran through an open meadow, and in the dry grass I would catch grasshoppers and use them for bait and sometimes I would catch grasshoppers and toss them into the stream and watch them float along swimming on the stream and curling on the surface as the current took them and then disappear as a trout rose. Sometimes I would fish four or five different streams in the night, starting as near as I could get to their source and fishing them down stream. When I had finished too quickly and the time did not go I would fish the stream over again, starting where it emptied into the lake and fishing back up stream, trying for all the trout I had missed coming down. Some nights too I made up streams, and some of them were very exciting and it was like being awake and dreaming. Some of those streams I still remember and think that I have fished in them, and they are confused with streams I really know. I gave them all names and went to them on the train and sometimes walked for miles to get to them.

But some nights I could not fish, and on those nights I was cold awake and said my prayers over and over and tried to pray for all the people I had ever known. That took up a great amount of time, for if you try to remember all the people you have ever known, going back to the earliest thing you remember—which was, with me, the attic of the house where I was born and my mother and father's wedding cake in a tin box hanging from

one of the rafters, and, in the attic, jars of snakes and other specimens that my father had collected as a boy and preserved in alcohol, the alcohol sunken in the jars so the backs of some of the snakes and specimens were exposed and had turned white—if you thought back that far, you remembered a great many people. If you prayed for all of them, saying a Hail Mary and an Our Father for each one, it took a long time and finally it would be light, and then you could go to sleep, if you were in a place where you could sleep in the daylight.

On those nights I tried to remember everything that had ever happened to me, starting with just before I went to the war and remembering back from one thing to another. I found I could only remember back to that attic in my grandfather's house. Then I would start there and remember this way again, until I reached the war.

I remember, after my grandfather died we moved away from that house and to a new house designed and built by my mother. Many things that were not to be moved were burned in the back yard and I remember those jars from the attic being thrown in the fire, and how they popped in the heat and the fire flamed up from the alcohol. I remember the snakes burning in the fire in the back yard. But there were no people in that, only things. I could not remember who burned the things even, and I would go on until I came to people and then stop and pray for them.

About the new house I remember how my mother was always cleaning things out and making a good clearance. One time when my father was away on a hunting trip she made a good thorough cleaning out in the basement and burned everything that should not have been there. When my father came home and got down from his buggy and hitched the horse, the fire was still burning in the road beside the house. I went out to meet him. He handed me his shotgun and looked at the fire. "What's this?" he asked.

I've been cleaning out the basement, dear, my mother said from the porch. She was standing there smiling, to meet him. My father looked at the fire and kicked at something. Then he leaned over and picked something out of the ashes. "Get a rake," he said to me. I went to the basement and brought a rake. My father raked very carefully in the ashes. He raked out

stone axes and stone skinning knives and tools for making arrow-heads and pieces of pottery and many arrow heads They had all been blackened and chipped by the fire My father raked them all out very carefully and spread them on the grass by the road His shotgun in its leather case and his game bags were on the grass where he had left them when he stepped down from the buggy

Take the gun and the bags in the house Nick and bring me a paper, he said My mother had gone inside the house I took the shotgun, which was heavy to carry and banged against my legs, and the two game bags and started toward the house Take them one at a time, my father said Don't try and carry too much at once I put down the game bags and took in the shotgun and brought out a newspaper from the pile in my father's office My father spread all the blackened, chipped stone implements on the paper and then wrapped them up The best arrow heads went all to pieces, he said He walked into the house with the paper package and I stayed outside on the grass with the two game bags After a while I took them in In remembering that, there were only two people, so I would pray for them both

Some nights, though I could not remember my prayers even I could only get as far as On earth as it is in heaven and then have to start all over and be absolutely unable to get past that Then I would have to recognize that I could not remember and give up saying my prayers that night and try something else So on some nights I would try to remember all the animals in the world by name and then the birds and then fishes and then countries and cities and then kinds of food and the names of all the streets I could remember in Chicago, and when I could not remember anything at all any more I would just listen And I do not remember a night on which you could not hear things If I could have a light I was not afraid to sleep, because I knew my soul would only go out of me if it were dark So, of course many nights I was where I could have a light and then I slept because I was nearly always tired and often very sleepy And I am sure many times too that I slept without knowing it—but I never slept knowing it, and on this night I listened to the silk worms You

can hear silk worms eating very clearly in the night and I lay with my eyes open and listened to them

There was only one other person in the room and he was awake too I listened to him being awake, for a long time He could not lie as quietly as I could because, perhaps, he had not had as much practice being awake We were lying on blankets spread over straw and when he moved the straw was noisy, but the silk worms were not frightened by any noise we made and ate on steadily There were the noises of night seven kilometres behind the lines outside but they were different from the small noises inside the room in the dark The other man in the room tried lying quietly Then he moved again I moved too, so he would know I was awake He had lived ten years in Chicago They had taken him for a soldier in nineteen fourteen when he had come back to visit his family, and they had given him me for an orderly because he spoke English I heard him listening, so I moved again in the blankets

Can't you sleep, Signor Tenente? he asked

No

I can't sleep, either

What's the matter?

I don't know I can't sleep

You feel all right?

Sure I feel good I just can't sleep

You want to talk a while? I asked

Sure What can you talk about in this damn place

This place is pretty good I said

Sure, he said It's all right

Tell me about out in Chicago, I said

Oh, he said, I told you all that once

Tell me about how you got married

I told you that

Was the letter you got Monday—from her?

Sure She writes me all the time She's making good money with the place

You'll have a nice place when you go back

Sure She runs it fine She's making a lot of money

Don't you think we'll wake them up talking? I asked

No They can't hear Anyway, they sleep like pigs I'm different he said I'm nervous

Talk quiet, I said Want a smoke?

We smoked skilfully in the dark

You don't smoke much Signor Tenente

No I've just about cut it out

'Well, he said, it don't do you any good and I suppose you get so you don't miss it Did you ever hear a blind man won't smoke because he can't see the smoke come out?

I don't believe it

I think it's all bull, myself he said I just heard it somewhere You know how you hear things

We were both quiet and I listened to the silk worms

You hear those damn silk worms? he asked You can hear them chew

It's funny, I said

Say, Signor Tenente, is there something really the matter that you can't sleep? I never see you sleep You haven't slept nights ever since I been with you

I don't know John, I said I got in pretty bad shape along early last spring and at night it bothers me

Just like I am he said I shouldn't have ever got in this war I'm too nervous

Maybe it will get better

Say, Signor Tenente, what did you get in this war for, anyway?

I don't know, John I wanted to, then

"Wanted to, he said That's a hell of a reason"

We oughtn't to talk out loud, I said

They sleep just like pigs he said They can't understand the English language anyway They don't know a damn thing What are you going to do when it's over and we go back to the States?

I'll get a job on a paper

In Chicago?

Maybe

Do you ever read what this fellow Brisbane writes? My wife cuts it out for me and sends it to me

Sure"

Did you ever meet him?

No, but I've seen him

I'd like to meet that fellow. He's a fine writer. My wife don't read English but she takes the paper just like when I was home and she cuts out the editorials and the sport page and sends them to me

How are your kids?

They're fine. One of the girls is in the fourth grade now. You know, Signor Tenente, if I didn't have the kids I wouldn't be your orderly now. They'd have made me stay in the line all the time

I'm glad you've got them

So am I. They're fine kids but I want a boy. Three girls and no boy. That's a hell of a note

Why don't you try and go to sleep?

No, I can't sleep now. I'm wide awake now, Signor Tenente. Say, I'm worried about you not sleeping though

It'll be all right, John

Imagine a young fellow like you not to sleep"

I'll get all right. It just takes a while

You got to get all right. A man can't get along that don't sleep. Do you worry about anything? You got anything on your mind?

No, John, I don't think so

You ought to get married, Signor Tenente. Then you wouldn't worry

I don't know

You ought to get married. Why don't you pick out some nice Italian girl with plenty of money? You could get any one you want. You're young and you got good decorations and you look nice. You been wounded a couple of times'

I can't talk the language well enough

'You talk it fine. To hell with talking the language. You don't have to talk to them. Marry them

I'll think about it

'You know some girls, don't you?

Sure

"Well, you marry the one with the most money Over here, the way they re brought up, they ll all make you a good wife

'I ll think about it

Don t think about it, Signor Tenente Do it

All right

A man ought to be married You ll never regret it Every man ought to be married

All right, I said Let s try and sleep a while

All right, Signor Tenente I ll try it again But you remember what I said

I ll remember it, I said Now let s sleep a while, John

'All right, he said I hope you sleep, Signor Tenente

I heard him roll in his blankets on the straw and then he was very quiet and I listened to him breathing regularly Then he started to snore I listened to him snore for a long time and then I stopped listening to him snore and listened to the silk worms eating They ate steadily, making a dropping in the leaves I had a new thing to think about and I lay in the dark with my eyes open and thought of all the girls I had ever known and what kind of wives they would make It was a very interesting thing to think about and for a while it killed off trout fishing and interfered with my prayers Finally, though, I went back to trout-fishing because I found that I could remember all the streams and there was always something new about them, while the girls, after I had thought about them a few times, blurred and I could not call them into my mind and finally they all blurred and all became rather the same and I gave up thinking about them almost altogether But I kept on with my prayers and I prayed very often for John in the nights and his class was removed from active service before the October offensive I was glad he was not there, because he would have been a great worry to me He came to the hospital in Milan to see me several months after and was very disappointed that I had not yet married, and I know he would feel very badly if he knew that, so far, I have never married He was going back to America and he was very certain about marriage and knew it would fix up everything

HENRY JAMES



“Europe”

Our feeling is, you know, that Becky *should* go. That earnest little remark comes back to me, even after long years as the first note of something that began, for my observation, the day I went with my sister-in-law to take leave of her good friends. It's a memory of the American time, which revives so at present—under some touch that doesn't signify—that it rounds itself off as an anecdote. That walk to say good-bye was the beginning and the end, so far as I enjoyed a view of it, was not till long after yet even the end also appears to me now as of the old days. I went, in those days on occasion, to see my sister-in-law, in whose affairs, on my brother's death, I had had to take a helpful hand. I continued to go indeed after these little matters were straightened out, for the pleasure, periodically, of the impression—the change to the almost pastoral sweetness of the good Boston suburb from the loud longitudinal New York. It was another world, with other manners, a different tone, a different taste, a savour nowhere so mild, yet so distinct, as in the square white house—with the pair of elms, like gigantic wheat sheaves, in front, the rustic orchard not far behind, the old-fashioned door lights, the big blue-and-white jars on the porch, the straight bricked walk from the high gate—that enshrined the extraordinary merit of Mrs. Rummle and her three daughters.

These ladies were so much of the place and the place so much of themselves that from the first of their being revealed to me I felt that nothing else at Brookbridge much mattered. They were what for me at any rate Brookbridge had most to give. I mean in the way of what it was naturally strongest in, the thing we called in New York the New England expression, the air of

Puritanism reclaimed and refined. The Rimmles had brought this down to a wonderful delicacy. They struck me even then—all four almost equally—as very ancient and very earnest, and I think there must have been the house in all the world in which culture first came to the aid of morning calls. The head of the family was the widow of a great public character—as public characters were understood at Brookbridge—whose speeches on anniversaries formed a part of the body of national eloquence spouted in the New England schools by little boys covetous of the most marked, though perhaps the easiest distinction. He was reported to have been celebrated, and in such fine declamatory connexions that he seemed to gesticulate even from the tomb. He was understood to have made, in his wife's company, the tour of Europe at a date not immensely removed from that of the battle of Waterloo. What was the age then of the bland firm antique Mrs. Rimmle at the period of her being first revealed to me? That's a point I'm not in a position to determine—I remember mainly that I was young enough to regard her as having reached the limit. And yet the limit for Mrs. Rimmle must have been prodigiously extended: the scale of its extension is in fact the very moral of this reminiscence. She was old, and her daughters were old, but I was destined to know them all as older. It was only by comparison and habit that—however much I recede—Rebecca, Maria and Jane were the young ladies.

I think it was felt that, though their mother's life, after thirty years of widowhood, had had a grand backward stretch, her blandness and firmness—and this in spite of her extreme physical frailty—would be proof against any surrender not overwhelmingly justified by time. It had appeared, years before, at a crisis of which the waves had not even yet quite subsided, a surrender not justified by anything nameable, that she should go to Europe with her daughters and for her health. Her health was supposed to require constant support, but when it had at that period tried conclusions with the idea of Europe it was not the idea of Europe that had been insidious enough to prevail. She hadn't gone, and Becky, Maria and Jane hadn't gone, and this was long ago. They still merely floated in the air of the visit achieved, with such introductions and such acclamations, in the early part of the

century, they still, with fond glances at the sunny parlour walls, only referred, in conversation, to divers pictorial and other reminders of it. The Miss Rimmles had quite been brought up on it, but Becky, as the most literary, had most mastered the subject. There were framed letters—tributes to their eminent father—suspended among the mementoes, and of two or three of these, the most foreign and complimentary, Becky had executed translations that figured beside the text. She knew already, through this and other illumination, so much about Europe that it was hard to believe for her in that limit of adventure which consisted only of her having been twice to Philadelphia. The others hadn't been to Philadelphia, but there was a legend that Jane had been to Saratoga. Becky was a short stout fair person with round serious eyes, a high forehead, the sweetest neatest enunciation, and a miniature of her father—done in Rome—worn as a breastpin. She had written the life, she had edited the speeches, of the original of this ornament, and now at last, beyond the seas, she was really to tread in his footsteps.

Fine old Mrs. Rimmle, in the sunny parlour and with a certain austerity of cap and chair—though with a gay new front that looked like rusty brown plush—had had so unusually good a winter that the question of her sparing two members of her family for an absence had been threshed as fine, I could feel, as even under that Puritan roof, any case of conscience had ever been threshed. They were to make their dash while the coast, as it were, was clear, and each of the daughters had tried—heroically, angelically and for the sake of each of her sisters—not to be one of the two. What I encountered that first time was an opportunity to concur with enthusiasm in the general idea that Becky's wonderful preparation would be wasted if she were the one to stay with their mother. Their talk of Becky's preparation (they had a sly old maidish humour that was as mild as milk) might have been of some mixture, for application somewhere, that she kept in a precious bottle. It had been settled at all events that, armed with this concoction and borne aloft by their introductions, she and Jane were to start. They were wonderful on their introductions, which proceeded naturally from their mother and were addressed to the charming families that in

vague generations had so admired vague Mr Rummle Jane, I found at Brookbridge had to be described, for want of other description as the pretty one, but it wouldn't have served to identify her unless you had seen the others. Her preparation was only this figment of her prettiness—only, that is, unless one took into account something that, on the spot, I silently divined the lifelong secret passionate ache of her little rebellious desire. They were all growing old in the yearning to go, but Jane's yearning was the sharpest. She struggled with it as people at Brookbridge mostly struggled with what they liked, but fate, by threatening to prevent what she disliked and what was therefore duty—which was to stay at home instead of Maria—had bewildered her, I judged, not a little. It was she who, in the words I have quoted, mentioned to me Becky's case and Becky's affinity as the clearest of all. Her mother moreover had on the general subject still more to say.

I positively desire, I really quite insist that they shall go, the old lady explained to us from her stiff chair. We've talked about it so often, and they've had from me so clear an account—I've amused them again and again with it—of what's to be seen and enjoyed. If they've had hitherto too many duties to leave, the time seems to have come to recognise that there are also many duties to *seek*. Wherever we go we find them—I always remind the girls of that. There's a duty that calls them to those wonderful countries, just as it called, at the right time, their father and myself—if it be only that of laying up for the years to come the same store of remarkable impressions, the same wealth of knowledge and food for conversation as, since my return, I've found myself so happy to possess. Mrs Rummle spoke of her return as of something of the year before last but the future of her daughters was somehow by a different law, to be on the scale of great vistas, of endless after tastes. I think that, without my being quite ready to say it, even this first impression of her was somewhat upsetting, there was a large placid perversity, a grim secrecy of intention, in her estimate of the ages.

Well, I'm so glad you don't delay it longer, I said to Miss Becky before we withdrew. And whoever should go, I continued in the spirit of the sympathy with which the good sisters

had already inspired me, I quite feel, with your family, you know, that *you* should But of course I hold that every one should I suppose I wished to attenuate my solemnity, there was, however, something in it I couldn't help It must have been a faint foreknowledge

Have you been a great deal yourself? Miss Jane, I remembered, enquired

Not so much but that I hope to go a good deal more So perhaps we shall meet, I encouragingly suggested

I recall something—something in the nature of susceptibility to encouragement—that this brought into the more expressive brown eyes to which Miss Jane mainly owed it that she was the pretty one Where, do you think?

I tried to think, Well, on the Italian lakes—Como, Bellagio, Lugano I liked to say the names to them

“Sublime, but neither bleak nor bare—nor misty are the mountains there! Miss Jane softly breathed, while her sister looked at her as if her acquaintance with the poetry of the subject made her the most interesting feature of the scene she evoked

But Miss Becky presently turned to me Do you know every thing—?

Everything?

In Europe

Oh yes I laughed, and one or two things even in America

The sisters seemed to me furtively to look at each other Well, you'll have to be quick—to meet *us*, Miss Jane resumed

But surely when you're once there you'll stay on

Stay on?—they murmured it simultaneously and with the oddest vibration of dread as well as of desire It was as if they had been in presence of a danger and yet wished me, who knew everything, to torment them with still more of it

Well, I did my best I mean it will never do to cut it short

No, that's just what I keep saying said brilliant Jane It would be better in that case not to go

Oh don't talk about not going—at this time! It was none of my business, but I felt shocked and impatient

No, not at *this* time! broke in Miss Maria, who, very red in the face, had joined us Poor Miss Maria was known as the flushed

one, but she was not flushed—she only had an unfortunate sur-
face. The third day after this was to see them embark.

Miss Becky, however, desired as little as any one to be in any
way extravagant. It's only the thought of our mother, she ex-
plained.

I looked a moment at the old lady, with whom my sister-in-law
was engaged. Well—your mother's magnificent.

Isn't she magnificent? —they eagerly took it up.

She *was*—I could reiterate it with sincerity, though I perhaps
mentally drew the line when Miss Maria again asked, as a fresh
ejaculation. I think she's better than Europe!

Maria! they both, at this, exclaimed with a strange emphasis.
It was as if they feared she had suddenly turned cynical over the
deep domestic drama of their casting of lots. The innocent laugh
with which she answered them gave the measure of her cynicism.

We separated at last, and my eyes met Mrs. Rummles as I held
for an instant her aged hand. It was doubtless only my fancy that
her calm cold look quietly accused me of something. Of what
could it accuse me? Only, I thought, of thinking.

2

I left Brookbridge the next day, and for some time after that had
no occasion to hear from my kinswoman, but when she finally
wrote there was a passage in her letter that affected me more
than all the rest. Do you know the poor Rummles never, after
all, went? The old lady, at the eleventh hour, broke down. Every-
thing broke down, and all of *them* on top of it, so that the dear
things are with us still. Miss Rummle, the night after our call,
had in the most unexpected manner, a turn for the worse—some
thing in the nature (though they're rather mysterious about it)
of a seizure, Becky and Jane felt it—dear devoted stupid angels
that they are—heartless to leave her at such a moment, and
Europe's indefinitely postponed. However, they think they're still
going—or *think* they think it—when she's better. They also think
—or think they think—that she *will* be better. I certainly pray she
may. So did I—quite fervently. I was conscious of a real pang
—I didn't know how much they had made me care.

Late that winter my sister in law spent a week in New York, when almost my first enquiry on meeting her was about the health of Miss Rimmle

Oh she's rather bad—she really is, you know. It's not surprising that at her age she should be infirm

Then what the deuce is her age?

I can't tell you to a year—but she's immensely old

That of course I saw, I replied—unless you literally mean so old that the records have been lost

My sister in law thought Well, I believe she wasn't positively young when she married. She lost three or four children before these women were born

We surveyed together a little, on this, the 'dark backward' And they were born, I gather, *after* the famous tour? Well then, as the famous tour was in a manner to celebrate—wasn't it?—the restoration of the Bourbons—— I considered I gasped. My dear child, what on earth do you make her out?

My relative, with her Brookbridge habit transferred her share of the question to the moral plane—turned it forth to wander, by implication at least, in the sandy desert of responsibility. Well, you know, we all immensely admire her

You can't admire her more than I do. She's awful.

My converser looked at me with a certain fear. She's *really* ill

Too ill to get better?

Oh no—we hope not. Because then they'll be able to go 'And *will* they go if she should?

Oh the moment they should be quite satisfied. I mean *really*, she added

I'm afraid I laughed at her—the Brookbridge *really* was a thing so by itself. But if she shouldn't get better? I went on

Oh don't speak of it! They want so to go

It's a pity they're so infernally good, I mused

No—don't say that. It's what keeps them up

Yes, but isn't it what keeps *her* up too?

My visitor looked grave. Would you like them to kill her?

I don't know that I was then prepared to say I should—though I believe I came very near it. But later on I burst all bounds, for

the subject grew and grew I went again before the good sisters ever did—I mean I went to Europe I think I went twice, with a brief interval, before my fate again brought round for me a couple of days at Brookbridge I had been there repeatedly in the previous time without making the acquaintance of the Rimmles but now that I had had the revelation I couldn't have it too much, and the first request I preferred was to be taken again to see them I remember well indeed the scruple I felt—the real delicacy—about betraying that I had, in the pride of my power, since our other meeting, stood, as then phrase went, among romantic scenes, but they were themselves the first to speak of it, and what moreover came home to me was that the coming and going of their friends in general—Brookbridge itself having even at that period one foot in Europe—was such as to place constantly before them the pleasure that was only postponed They were thrown back after all on what the situation, under a final analysis, had most to give—the sense that, as every one kindly said to them and they kindly said to every one, Europe would keep Every one felt for them so deeply that their own kindness in alleviating every one's feelings was really what came out most Mrs Rummle was still in her stiff chair and in the sunny parlour, but if *she* made no scruple of introducing the Italian lakes my heart sank to observe that she dealt with them, as a topic, not in the least in the leave taking manner in which Falstaff babbled of green fields

I'm not sure that after this my pretexts for a day or two with my sister in law weren't apt to be a mere cover for another glimpse of these particulars I at any rate never went to Brookbridge without an irrepressible eagerness for our customary call A long time seems to me thus to have passed, with glimpses and lapses, considerable impatience and still more pity Our visits indeed grew shorter, for as my companion said, they were more and more of a strain It finally struck me that the good sisters even shrank from me a little as from one who penetrated their consciousness in spite of himself It was as if they knew where I thought they ought to be, and were moved to deprecate at last, by a systematic silence on the subject of that hemisphere, the criminality I fain would fix on them They were full instead—

as with the instinct of throwing dust in my eyes—of little pathetic hypocrisies about Brookbridge interests and delights I dare say that as time went on my deeper sense of their situation came practically to rest on my companions report of it I certainly think I recollect every word we ever exchanged about them, even if I've lost the thread of the special occasions The impression they made on me after each interval always broke out with extravagance as I walked away with her

She may be as old as she likes—I don't care Its the fearful age the girls are reaching that constitutes the scandal One shouldn't pry into such matters, I know, but the years and the chances are really going They're all growing old together—it will presently be too late, and then mother meanwhile perches over them like a vulture—what shall I call it?—calculating Is she waiting for them successively to drop off? She'll survive them each and all There's something too remorseless in it

Yes, but what do you want her to do? If the poor thing *can't* die she *can't* Do you want her to take poison or to open a blood vessel? I dare say she'd prefer to go

I beg your pardon, I must have replied, you daren't say any thing of the sort If she'd prefer to go she *would* go She'd feel the propriety, the decency, the necessity of going She just prefers *not* to go She prefers to stay and keep up the tension, and her calling them girls and talking of the good time they'll still have is the mere conscious mischief of a subtle old witch They won't have *any* time—there isn't any time to have! I mean there's, on her own part, no real loss of measure or of perspective in it She *knows* she's a hundred and ten, and she takes a cruel pride in it

My sister in law differed with me about this, she held that the old woman's attitude was an honest one and that her magnificent vitality, so great in spite of her infirmities, made it inevitable she should attribute youth to persons who had come into the world so much later Then suppose she should die?—so my fellow student of the case always put it to me

Do you mean while her daughters are away? There's not the least fear of that—not even if at the very moment of their departure she should be *in extremis* They'd find her all right on their return

But think how they'd feel not to have been with her!

That's only, I repeat, on the unsound assumption. If they'd only go to-morrow—literally make a good rush for it—they'll be with her when they come back. That will give them plenty of time. I'm afraid I even heartlessly added that if she *should*, against every probability, pass away in their absence they wouldn't have to come back at all—which would be just the compensation proper to their long privation. And then Maria would come out to join the two others, and they would be—though but for the too scanty remnant of their career—as merry as the day is long.

I remained ready, somehow, pending the fulfilment of that vision, to sacrifice Maria. It was only over the urgency of the case for the others respectively that I found myself balancing. Sometimes it was for Becky I thought the tragedy deepest—sometimes, and in quite a different manner, I thought it most dire for Jane. It was Jane after all who had most sense of life. I seemed in fact dimly to discern in Jane a sense—as yet undescried by herself or by any one—of all sorts of queer things. Why didn't *she* go? I used desperately to ask, why didn't she make a bold personal dash for it—strike up a partnership with some one or other of the travelling spinsters in whom Brookbridge more and more abounded? Well, there came a flash for me at a particular point of the grey middle desert: my correspondent was able to let me know that poor Jane at last *had* sailed. She had gone of a sudden—I liked my sister-in-law's view of suddenness—with the kind Hathaways, who had made an irresistible grab at her and lifted her off her feet. They were going for the summer and for Mr Hathaway's health, so that the opportunity was perfect and it was impossible not to be glad that something very like physical force had finally prevailed. This was the general feeling at Brookbridge, and I might imagine what Brookbridge had been brought to from the fact that, at the very moment she was hustled off, the doctor, called to her mother at the peep of dawn, had considered that *he* at least must stay. There had been real alarm—greater than ever before, it actually did seem as if this time the end had come. But it was Becky, strange to say, who, though fully recognising the nature of the crisis, had kept the situation in hand and insisted upon action. This, I remember, brought back to me a discomfort

with which I had been familiar from the first One of the two had sailed, and I was sorry it wasn't the other But if it had been the other I should have been equally sorry

I saw with my eyes that very autumn what a fool Jane would have been if she had again backed out Her mother had of course survived the peril of which I had heard, profiting by it indeed as she had profited by every other, she was sufficiently better again to have come downstairs It was there that, as usual, I found her but with a difference of effect produced somehow by the absence of one of the girls It was as if, for the others, though they hadn't gone to Europe, Europe had come to them Jane's letters had been so frequent and so beyond even what could have been hoped It was the first time, however, that I perceived on the old woman's part a certain failure of lucidity Jane's flight was clearly the great fact with her, but she spoke of it as if the fruit had now been plucked and the parenthesis closed I don't know what sinking sense of still further physical duration I gathered, as a menace, from this first hint of her confusion of mind

My daughter has been, my daughter has been——' She kept saying it, but didn't say where, that seemed unnecessary, and she only repeated the words to her visitors with a face that was all puckers and yet now, save in so far as it expressed an ineffaceable complacency, all blankness I think she rather wanted us to know how little she had stood in the way It added to something—I scarce knew what—that I found myself desiring to extract privately from Becky As our visit was to be of the shortest my opportunity—for one of the young ladies always came to the door with us—was at hand Mrs Rummle, as we took leave, again sounded her phrase, but she added this time I'm so glad she's going to have always——'

I knew so well what she meant that, as she again dropped, looking at me queerly and becoming momentarily dim, I could help her out Going to have what *you* have?

Yes, yes—my privilege Wonderful experience, she mumbled She bowed to me a little as if I would understand She has things to tell

I turned, slightly at a loss, to Becky She has then already arrived?

Becky was at that moment looking a little strangely at her mother, who answered my question. She reached New York this morning—she comes on to-day.

Oh then—! But I let the matter pass as I met Becky's eye—I saw there was a hitch somewhere. It was not she but Maria who came out with us, on which I cleared up the question of their sister's reappearance.

Oh no, not to night, Maria smiled, that's only the way mother puts it. We shall see her about the end of November—the Hathaways are so indulgent. They kindly extend their tour.

For *her* sake? How sweet of them! my sister-in-law exclaimed.

I can see our friend's plain mild old face take on a deeper mildness, even though a higher colour, in the light of the open door.

Yes, it's for Jane they prolong it. And do you know what they write? She gave us time, but it was too great a responsibility to guess. Why that it has brought her out.

Oh, I knew it *would*! my companion sympathetically sighed.

Maria put it more strongly still. They say we wouldn't know her.

This sounded a little awful, but it was after all what I had expected.

3

My correspondent in Brookbridge came to me that Christmas, with my niece, to spend a week, and the arrangement had of course been prefaced by an exchange of letters, the first of which from my sister-in-law scarce took space for acceptance of my invitation before going on to say: The Hathaways are back—but without Miss Jane! She presented in a few words the situation thus created at Brookbridge, but was not yet, I gathered, fully in possession of the other one—the situation created in Europe by the presence there of that lady. The two together, however that might be demanded, I quickly felt, all my attention, and perhaps my impatience to receive my relative was a little sharpened by my desire for the whole story. I had it at last by the Christmas fire, and I may say without reserve that it gave me

all I could have hoped for I listened eagerly, after which I produced the comment. Then she simply refused——

To budge from Florence? Simply. She had it out there with the poor Hathaways, who felt responsible for her safety, pledged to restore her to her mother's, to her sister's hands, and showed herself in a light they mention under their breath, that made their dear old hair stand on end. Do you know what, when they first got back, they said of her—at least it was *his* phrase—to two or three people?

I thought a moment. That she had tasted blood?

My visitor fairly admired me. How clever of you to guess! It's exactly what he did say. She appeared—she continues to appear, it seems—in a new character.

I wondered a little. But that's exactly—don't you remember?—what Miss Maria reported to us from them, that we wouldn't know her.

My sister-in-law perfectly remembered. Oh yes—she broke out from the first. But when they left her she was worse.

Worse?

Well, different—different from anything she ever *had* been or—for that matter—had had a chance to be. My reporter hung fire a moment, but presently faced me. Rather strange and free and obstreperous.

Obstreperous? I wondered again.

Peculiarly so, I inferred, on the question of not coming away. She wouldn't hear of it and, when they spoke of her mother, said she had given her mother up. She had thought she should like Europe, but didn't know she should like it so much. They had been fools to bring her if they expected to take her away. She was going to see what she could—she hadn't yet seen half. The end of it at any rate was that they had to leave her alone.

I seemed to see it all—to see even the scared Hathaways. So she *is* alone?

She told them poor thing, it appears, and in a tone they'll never forget, that she was in any case quite old enough to be. She cried—she quite went on—over not having come sooner. That's why the only way for her, my companion mused, *is*, I suppose,

to stay They wanted to put her with some people or other—to find some American family But she says she's on her own feet

And she's still in Florence?

No—I believe she was to travel She's bent on the East

I burst out laughing Magnificent Jane! It's most interesting Only I feel that I distinctly *should* know her To my sense, always, I must tell you she had it in her

My relative was silent a little So it now appears Becky always felt

And yet pushed her off? Magnificent Becky!

My companion met my eyes a moment You don't know the queerest part I mean the way it has *most* brought her out

I turned it over I felt I should like to know—to that degree in deed that, oddly enough I jocosely disguised my eagerness You don't mean she has taken to drink?

My visitor had a dignity—and yet had to have a freedom She has taken to flirting

I expressed disappointment Oh she took to *that* long ago Yes I declared at my kinswoman's stare, she positively flirted—with *me*!

The stare perhaps sharpened Then you fluted with *her*?

How else could I have been as sure as I wanted to be? But has she means?

Means to flirt? —my friend looked an instant as if she spoke literally I don't understand about the means—though of course they have something But I have my impression, she went on I think that Becky— It seemed almost too grave to say

But *I* had no doubts That Becky's backing her?

She brought it out Financing her

Stupendous Becky! So that morally then—

Becky's quite in sympathy But isn't it too odd? my sister in law asked

Not in the least Didn't we know, as regards Jane, that Europe was to bring her out? Well, it has also brought out Rebecca

It has indeed! my companion indulgently sighed So what would it do if she were there?

I should like immensely to see And we *shall* see

‘Do you believe then she ll still go?’

Certainly She *must*

But my friend shook it off She won’t

She shall! I retorted with a laugh But the next moment I said And what does the old woman say?

To Jane’s behaviour? Not a word—never speaks of it She talks now much less than she used—only seems to wait But it’s my belief she thinks

And—do you mean—knows?

Yes, knows she’s abandoned In her silence there she takes it in

It’s her way of making Jane pay? At this, somehow, I felt more serious Oh dear, dear—she ll disinheri her!

When in the following June I went on to return my sister in law’s visit the first object that met my eyes in her little white parlour was a figure that to my stupefaction, presented itself for the moment as that of Miss Rummle I had gone to my room after arriving and had come down when dressed, the apparition I speak of had arisen in the interval Its ambiguous character lasted, however, but a second or two—I had taken Becky for her mother because I knew no one but her mother of that extreme age Becky’s age was quite startling, it had made a great stride, though, strangely enough, irrecoverably seated as she now was in it, she had a wizened brightness that I had scarcely yet seen in her I remember indulging on this occasion in two silent observations one on the article of my not having hitherto been conscious of her full resemblance to the old lady, and the other to the effect that, as I had said to my sister-in law at Christmas, Europe even as reaching her only through Jane’s sensibilities, had really at last brought her out She was in fact out in a manner of which this encounter offered to my eyes a unique example it was the single hour, often as I had been at Brookbridge, of my meeting her elsewhere than in her mother’s drawing room I surmise that, besides being adjusted to her more marked time of life, the garments she wore abroad, and in particular her little plain bonnet, presented points of resemblance to the close sable sheath and the quaint old head gear that, in the white house behind the elms, I had from far back associated with the eternal

image in the stiff chair Of course I immediately spoke of Jane, showing an interest and asking for news, on which she answered me with a smile, but not at all as I had expected

Those are not really the things you want to know—where she is, whom she s with, how she manages and where she s going next—oh no! And the admirable woman gave a laugh that was some how both light and sad—sad, in particular, with a strange long weariness What you do want to know is when she s coming back

I shook my head very kindly, but out of a wealth of experience that, I flattered myself, was equal to Miss Becky s I do know it Never

Miss Becky exchanged with me at this a long deep look Never

We had, in silence, a little luminous talk about it, at the end of which she seemed to have told me the most interesting things And how s your mother? I then enquired

She hesitated, but finally spoke with the same serenity My mother s all right You see she s not alive

Oh Becky! my sister in law pleadingly interjected

But Becky only addressed herself to me Come and see if she is I think she isn t—but Maria perhaps isn t so clear Come at all events and judge and tell me

It was a new note, and I was a little bewildered Ah but I m not a doctor!

No, thank God—you re not That s why I ask you And now she said good bye

I kept her hand a moment *You re* more alive than ever!

I m very tired She took it with the same smile, but for Becky it was much to say

4

Not alive, the next day, was certainly what Mrs Rimmle looked when arriving in pursuit of my promise, I found her with Miss Maria, in her usual place Though wasted and shrunken she still occupied her high backed chair with a visible theory of erectness, and her intensely aged face—combined with something dauntless that belonged to her very presence and that was effec-

tive even in this extremity—might have been that of some immemorial sovereign, of indistinguishable sex, brought forth to be shown to the people in disproof of the rumour of extinction Mummified and open eyed she looked at me, but I had no impression that she made me out I had come this time without my sister-in-law, who had frankly pleaded to me—which also, for a daughter of Brookbridge, was saying much—that the house had grown too painful Poor Miss Maria excused Miss Becky on the score of her not being well—and that, it struck me, was saying most of all The absence of the others gave the occasion a different note, but I talked with Miss Maria for five minutes and recognised that—save for her saying, of her own movement, anything about Jane—she now spoke as if her mother had lost hearing or sense, in fact both, alluding freely and distinctly though indeed favourably, to her condition ‘She has expected your visit and much enjoys it, my entertainer said, while the old woman, soundless and motionless, simply fixed me without expression Of course there was little to keep me, but I became aware as I rose to go that there was more than I had supposed

On my approaching her to take leave Mrs Rummle gave signs of consciousness Have you heard about Jane?

I hesitated, feeling a responsibility, and appealed for direction to Maria’s face But Maria’s face was troubled, was turned altogether to her mother’s About her life in Europe? I then rather helplessly asked

The old lady fronted me on this in a manner that made me feel silly ‘Her life? —and her voice, with this second effort, came out stronger Her death, if you please”

‘Her death?’ I echoed, before I could stop myself, with the accent of deprecation

Miss Maria uttered a vague sound of pain, and I felt her turn away, but the marvel of her mother’s little unquenched spark still held me Jane’s dead We’ve heard, said Mrs Rummle We’ve heard from—where is it we’ve heard from? She had quite revived—she appealed to her daughter

The poor old girl, crimson, rallied to her duty ‘From Europe”

Mrs Rummle made at us both a little grim inclination of the

head From Europe I responded, in silence, by a deflexion from every rigour, and, still holding me, she went on And now Rebecca’s going”

She had gathered by this time such emphasis to say it that again, before I could help myself, I vibrated in reply To Europe—now? It was as if for an instant she had made me believe it

She only stared at me, however, from her wizened mask, then her eyes followed my companion “Has she gone?”

Not yet, mother Maria tried to treat it as a joke, but her smile was embarrassed and dim

Then where is she?

She’s lying down

The old woman kept up her hard queer gaze, but directing it after a minute to me She’s going

Oh some day! I foolishly laughed, and on this I got to the door, where I separated from my younger hostess, who came no further

Only, as I held the door open, she said to me under cover of it and very quietly “It’s poor mother’s idea”

I saw—it was her idea Mine was—for some time after this, even after I had returned to New York and to my usual occupations—that I should never again see Becky I had seen her for the last time, I believed, under my sister-in-law’s roof, and in the autumn it was given to me to hear from that fellow admirer that she had succumbed at last to the situation The day of the call I have just described had been a date in the process of her slow shrinkage—it was literally the first time she had, as they said at Brookbridge, given up She had been ill for years, but the other state of health in the contemplation of which she had spent so much of her life had left her till too late no margin for heeding it The power of attention came at last simply in the form of the discovery that it *was* too late, on which, naturally, she had given up more and more I had heard indeed, for weeks before, by letter, how Brookbridge had watched her do so, in consequence of which the end found me in a manner prepared Yet in spite of my preparation there remained with me a soreness, and when I was next—it was some six months later—on the scene of her martyr-

dom I fear I replied with an almost rabid negative to the question put to me in due course by my kinswoman Call on them? Never again!

I went none the less the very next day Everything was the same in the sunny parlour—everything that most mattered, I mean the centenarian mummy in the high chair and the tributes, in the little frames on the walls, to the celebrity of its late husband Only Maria Rummle was different if Becky, on my last seeing her, had looked as old as her mother, Maria—save that she moved about—looked older I remember she moved about, but I scarce remember what she said, and indeed what was there to say? When I risked a question, however, she found a reply

“But *now* at least—? I tried to put it to her suggestively

At first she was vague ‘Now?’

“Won’t Miss Jane come back?”

Oh the headshake she gave me! “Never” It positively pictured to me, for the instant, a well-preserved woman, a rich ripe *seconde jeunesse* by the Arno

“Then that’s only to make more sure of your finally joining her” Maria Rummle repeated her headshake ‘Never’

We stood so a moment bleakly face to face, I could think of no attenuation that would be particularly happy But while I tried I heard a hoarse gasp that fortunately relieved me—a signal strange and at first formless from the occupant of the high-backed chair ‘Mother wants to speak to you, Maria then said

So it appeared from the drop of the old woman’s jaw, the expression of her mouth opened as if for the emission of sound It was somehow difficult to me to seem to sympathise without hypocrisy, but, so far as a step nearer could do that, I invited communication Have you heard where Becky’s gone? the wonderful witch’s white lips then extraordinarily asked

It drew from Maria, as on my previous visits, an uncontrollable groan, and this in turn made me take time to consider As I considered, however, I had an inspiration To Europe?

I must have adorned it with a strange grimace, but my inspiration had been right To Europe, said Mrs Rummle

A E COPPARD



Willie Waugh

On a fine afternoon in April a man is sitting at the foot of an ash-tree beside the pool of water on Peck Common. Twelve tiny ducklings on the water belong to him, and he is admiring them. There are four ash-trees there, growing out of the tenderest turf and spreading over the pool, the bright air seems to swim visibly around their bare grey limbs. A carrier this man is, a little man with an old conical hat, his coat sleeves coming down over his knuckles, his hat coming down over his ears, and he is the master piece of the whole district for trapping a mole. Beside him a willow bush, richly embowered, also stretches out above the pool, every twig of it bearing a ball of blossom covered with yellow dust, whereon fat bees are mumbling and clinging. But the days air comes coldly from the east, and at intervals the bees, so chilled tumble into the pool. The man takes a branch he has broken from the palm tree and drags them to earth again, where they dry their wings and crawl into the grass for comfort.

Lend us your saw, Willie Waugh, said Peter Finch, coming suddenly upon him.

Good evening, said the man in the funny hat, without looking up. He had not noticed Peter's approach, for the grass was quiet under his footfall, and then his ducklings had just paddled to the shore and one of them was behaving queerly. It would not follow its friends, it just kept turning round and turning round, squealing all the time.

Peter Finch asked again. Will you lend me your saw for a few nights, Willie?

Look at that duckling, Waugh indicated the creature with his pipe, do you know what the matter is with that duckling?

'I only waunts to borrow it for a few nights,' continued Peter Finch, a tall man, a thin man, who shaved in vain so blue was his sharp chin. The old keeper asked me to fell some trees arter I done my daily work, so it's for a bit of overtime, you see. Your big saw, if you're not a using of it.

It's blind, that duckling is, explained the other, blind.

I ain't got a saw of my own, Wilhe, or I wouldn't ask ye. — Peter was not to be diverted — I'll take care of it, you knows that, I'll take care of it well.'

I shan't kill it for a day or two, not yet I shan't. I'll see how it gets on. It eats like a blam young tiger," commented Waugh.

Dan'l Gunn, pursued Peter, "ask me and Hoppy Marlow to fell they trees. Weem a going to do it between us, overtime work. It ull put three or four pounds apiece in our pockets. If so be as you'd lend us your big saw.

Blind as a bat, Wilhe Waugh continued, that's why he keeps on turning round. It ain't got no tail now, neither.'

I thought Hoppy had got one, but he ain't. He used to have a big saw, I thought, I quite thought that, but he says as how he didn't.'

'That foal in Casby's paddock, cried Waugh, 'picked it up in its mouth last night and started chawing of it like a wisp hay. That little duck! That's a fine caper, an it? I collared that duckling away from it just in time, but his tail was gone.' As disgust and indignation mounted within him Wilhe turned and looked Peter Finch fiercely in the eyes. An I gin him a kick in the stomach as cured him o' duck hunting, I warrant!

"So I'll send my young Tommy, said Peter, round for it to-morrow, after tea-time. Right-o. And off went Peter.

Next evening little Tom Finch came to the carrier's door to fetch the saw for his father to fell the trees along of Hoppy Marlow.

'I've changed my mind, declared Wilhe Waugh. I can't lend him, tell your father.'

Our father sent me for the saw, please, repeated the child.

And I tell you I ain't a-going to lend him. Can't you hear? I told you once and now I tell you twice. Tell your father I've changed my mind.'

Away went little Tom, and soon afterwards Peter Finch appeared at the door of Waugh's cottage which was No. 93 Peck

Common, although if you took a spyglass, even, you would not, and could not, see more than ten or a dozen cottages there. Willie had crept away to the pool, but Peter saw him and went after him.

Lend us your saw, Willie Waugh, begged Peter, I've a job of overtime to do.

I can't lend you, Willie said.

Why can't you lend me your big saw?' There was a sharpish note in Peter's voice.

I've changed my mind.

And for why have you changed your mind?

Willie meditated, stared at his interrogator's chest, removed his pipe with his right hand, and with the forefinger of his left he tapped the arm of Peter Finch, and began.

I'll tell you for why, I'll diagonize it for you. You're a man in full heart of work, from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon, a full week's work, and a full week's pay you draws.

Ah?

Well, there's a-plenty men roundabout here's not doing more than two or three days' work instead of a week, and they's the ones as ought to be set to do this overtime job. When you be in full heart o' work and they be not, you to go and work overtime for another man does them out of the chance.

Ho, that's how it runs, is it? commented Peter.

That's it an' all. Several there be. Two of 'em I knows for certain at Creevey Lane—Moby Colfax for one—and there's Topper Oakes over at Firebrass Hill, and some more I knows. And that's why I shan't a-lend ee my saw.

Topper Oakes! He couldn't fell a nut tree! Look here, did I ever do you a bad turn, Willie Waugh?

Willie began to fill his pipe. No, not to my knowledge, I can't say you ever did that.

'Treat me as a neighbour, then, as a neighbour should. Do me no harm. Do me no harm, and I'll do none. Only man I ever harmed is myself. Full work and full pay, says you, but you knows you can put that thirty shillings in your eye and sneeze on it—and *then* it wouldn't choke you.'

I understands all that.

'Eight young uns I got, and a wife, and a cripple mother.

"Well, that's your look out, it's your luck I understands all that. But if you doos this overtime job you're depriving another man of his just dues, and if I lends you my saw I be just as bad."

How d'ye make that out?

'Stands to reason. You be a taking the bread out of a man's mouth. That's truth and sound sense.'

Peter Finch stared at him as if he were an absurd phenomenon—an ox with a hat on, perhaps, or a pig with a toothbrush. You're chattering as if you was the lord mayor of this parish.

'Sound truth and sound sense, repeated Willie, sound as a bell.'

Ah, and hard as a ram's horn," quoth Peter. There's many a man as wouldn't ever speak to you again for this, Willie Waugh. You talk of robbing men of their bread—tell me this—Would you lend e'er a one of em your big saw?

'If they asked me, replied Waugh imperturbably, I might

Then wouldn't you be a-robbing me and mine, and Hoppy Marlow and his n?

No!

Course you would. Come on, I'll pay you a crown for the use of that saw.

I couldn't take it, said Waugh, 'my conscience wouldn't let me.'

Bah! If I harboured a thing like that I wouldn't call it a conscience! You're a sour neighbour, Willie Waugh, sour as varjuice. I've done a good deed to you, more than once I have, and known you all my life.

'The same to you, many a time! ejaculated Willie. Then he lit his pipe that he always smoked with the bowl upside down.

When the wheel of your cart come off on Cadmer Hill, continued Finch, and we had to unempty it cause of a storm coming on.

I unemptied it myself, cried the carrier.

"Didn't I carry four sacks of meal home for you? On my back? Half a mile each time, and rain and sweat sopping me through!

'Who was it drove your missus to the firmery when she had her breast off for cancer, eh? A day's journey, that were, free and for nothing!'

"Well, and when you and your wife was down with fever, and no one come near you for fear of catching it, not even the parson, eh? Said he never knew about it

Ah, the Peter!

Who looked after you then, Willie Waugh, and your stock, Willie Waugh, and emptied your slops, Willie Waugh?

And who collected a subscription for you when your sow died? rejoined the carrier Seven pounds fourteen shillins and ninepence ha penny for a pig as warn t worth half that money

That's right enough,' Peter agreed You been a good neighbour, good as a man ever knowed But why do you round on me now?

'I've not rounded on you, I'm only telling you

A neighbour, Peter Finch observed, should stand *by* his neighbour, turn and turn about I've lived next or nigh you all my life You riz in the world, you've prospered, but I haven't

God bless me, cried Waugh, when I started out to work I got three and six a week and a pound at Michaelmas My old dad would give me a penny out of that on Saturdays'

'Oh, I knows I knowed you, Willie Waugh, ever since you was a nipper, I knowed you when you put the tadpoles in the font at Farmer Fescot's christening'

"Five o'clock we had to get up then, and work till dark None of this 'ere starting at seven and leaving off at five, and football, and crickets, and God knows what all! They *was* some farmers in those days, but if their old corpses could come out of their holes and see what goes on now, why, they they they'd go mad—it ud kill em!

Peter was unmoved, a very unfeeling, unprincipled man

Too many holidays in this country, Willie rambled moodily on, that's what there is I'd sooner work seven days a week than six, for I don't know what to be at a Sundays

We was at school then, mused Peter I caught the tadpoles, a tin-full, and you tipped em in the font water There was a racket about that'

'Ah, commented Willie, "you was afraid to do it of yourself I bet you once as you couldn't swallow a butterfly'

Ah, and I ate four of 'em at once, interrupted Willie

But you was sick arterwards'

"Nor you didnt pay up, by dam Waugh, leaning against one of the ash-trees, smiled into the pool

That Farmer Fescot was a good old farmer as ever was, a thoroughbred un

Thoroughly thoroughbred, granted Peter We cooked the liver of his piebald nag when it died, you and me!

His wife warn t much, declared Willie

No She ought to have had her head shook Do you recollect that circus as come by here one evening? Going out west some wheres They pasted up bills on the barns and walls as they went along, and we dogged em and turned their bills all upsy down Miles we followed that circus, and it wasnt half late when we got home!

Ah,' chortled Willie, I members you falling over the elephants dung in the dark

That's a few years ago, sighed Peter, a few years ago, thirty, forty Ah! He turned and sauntered away, plucking as he did so a blade of grass and chewing it as he went

Willie called after him Arn t you going to take that saw?

If you like, Willie, Peter turned, if you dont mind obliging me for a few nights

Well, take the blam saw, said Willie gruffly Think I m going to run about arter you with it!

So they went back to the cottage, and Peter got the saw and took it home When he had gone Willie Waugh came and leaned over his garden gate, staring across the common at the four ash trees by the pond where the grass was so very green The trees were budding, the sky beyond them was glassy blue, with a cusp of new white moon, and clouds with fiery fringes hovering on the borders of everywhere Long shadows slanted from the ash trees, and long smoke twirled from the village chimneys Tir a-loo sang the birds, and the eyes of the playing children shone with a golden light

I never see,' grumbled Willie to himself, never in all my days—such a pack of fools—as there be in this world And, he added, they be all alike

JOSEPH CONRAD



The Secret Sharer

On my right hand there were lines of fishing stakes resembling a mysterious system of half submerged bamboo fences, incomprehensible in its division of the domain of tropical fishes, and crazy of aspect as if abandoned forever by some nomad tribe of fishermen now gone to the other end of the ocean, for there was no sign of human habitation as far as the eye could reach. To the left a group of barren islets, suggesting ruins of stone walls, towers, and blockhouses, had its foundations set in a blue sea that itself looked solid, so still and stable did it lie below my feet, even the track of light from the westering sun shone smoothly, without that animated glitter which tells of an imperceptible ripple. And when I turned my head to take a parting glance at the tug which had just left us anchored outside the bar, I saw the straight line of the flat shore joined to the stable sea, edge to edge, with a perfect and unmarked closeness, in one levelled floor half brown, half blue under the enormous dome of the sky. Corresponding in their insignificance to the islets of the sea, two small clumps of trees, one on each side of the only fault in the impeccable joint, marked the mouth of the river Meinam we had just left on the first preparatory stage of our homeward journey, and, far back on the inland level, a larger and loftier mass—the grove surrounding the great Paknam pagoda, was the only thing on which the eye could rest from the vain task of exploring the monotonous sweep of the horizon. Here and there gleams as of a few scattered pieces of silver marked the windings of the great river, and on the nearest of them, just within the bar, the tug steaming right into the land became lost to my sight, hull and funnel and masts, as though the impassive earth had swallowed her up without an effort, with-

out a tremor My eye followed the light cloud of her smoke, now here, now there, above the plain, according to the devious curves of the stream, but always fainter and farther away, till I lost it at last behind the miter-shaped hill of the great pagoda And then I was left alone with my ship, anchored at the head of the Gulf of Siam

She floated at the starting point of a long journey, very still in an immense stillness, the shadows of her spars flung far to the eastward by the setting sun At that moment I was alone on her decks There was not a sound in her—and around us nothing moved, nothing lived, not a canoe on the water, not a bird in the air, not a cloud in the sky In this breathless pause at the threshold of a long passage we seemed to be measuring our fitness for a long and arduous enterprise, the appointed task of both our existences to be carried out, far from all human eyes, with only sky and sea for spectators and for judges

There must have been some glare in the air to interfere with one's sight, because it was only just before the sun left us that my roaming eyes made out beyond the highest ridge of the principal islet of the group something which did away with the solemnity of perfect solitude The tide of darkness flowed on swiftly, and with tropical suddenness a swarm of stars came out above the shadowy earth, while I lingered yet, my hand resting lightly on my ship's rail as if on the shoulder of a trusted friend But, with all that multitude of celestial bodies staring down at one, the comfort of quiet communion with her was gone for good And there were also disturbing sounds by this time—voices, footsteps forward, the steward flitted along the main deck, a busily ministering spirit, a hand bell tinkled urgently under the poop deck

I found my two officers waiting for me near the supper table, in the lighted cuddy We sat down at once, and as I helped the chief mate, I said

Are you aware that there is a ship anchored inside the islands? I saw her mastheads above the ridge as the sun went down

He raised sharply his simple face, overcharged by a terrible growth of whisker, and emitted his usual ejaculations Bless my soul, sir! You don't say so!

My second mate was a round-cheeked, silent young man, grave

beyond his years, I thought, but as our eyes happened to meet I detected a slight quiver on his lips I looked down at once It was not my part to encourage sneering on board my ship It must be said, too, that I knew very little of my officers In consequence of certain events of no particular significance, except to myself, I had been appointed to the command only a fortnight before Neither did I know much of the hands forward All these people had been together for eighteen months or so, and my position was that of the only stranger on board I mention this because it has some bearing on what is to follow But what I felt most was my being a stranger to the ship, and if all the truth must be told, I was somewhat of a stranger to myself The youngest man on board (barring the second mate), and untried as yet by a position of the fullest responsibility, I was willing to take the adequacy of the others for granted They had simply to be equal to their tasks, but I wondered how far I should turn out faithful to that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly

Meantime the chief mate, with an almost visible effect of collaboration on the part of his round eyes and frightful whiskers, was trying to evolve a theory of the anchored ship His dominant trait was to take all things into earnest consideration He was of a painstaking turn of mind As he used to say, he liked to account to himself for practically everything that came in his way, down to a miserable scorpion he had found in his cabin a week before The why and the wherefore of that scorpion—how it got on board and came to select his room rather than the pantry (which was a dark place and more what a scorpion would be partial to) and how on earth it managed to drown itself in the ink well of his writing desk—had exercised him infinitely The ship within the islands was much more easily accounted for and just as we were about to rise from the table he made his pronouncement She was, he doubted not, a ship from home lately arrived Probably she drew too much water to cross the bar except at the top of spring tides Therefore she went into that natural harbor to wait for a few days in preference to remaining in an open roadstead

‘That’s so, confirmed the second mate, suddenly, in his slightly hoarse voice. She draws over twenty feet. She’s the Liverpool ship *Sephora* with a cargo of coal. Hundred and twenty three days from Cardiff.’

We looked at him in surprise.

The tugboat skipper told me when he came on board for your letters, sir, explained the young man. He expects to take her up the river the day after tomorrow.

After thus overwhelming us with the extent of his information he slipped out of the cabin. The mate observed regretfully that he could not account for that young fellow’s whims. What prevented him telling us all about it at once, he wanted to know.

I detained him as he was making a move. For the last two days the crew had had plenty of hard work and the night before they had very little sleep. I felt painfully that I—a stranger—was doing something unusual when I directed him to let all hands turn in without setting an anchor watch. I proposed to keep on deck myself till one o’clock or thereabouts. I would get the second mate to relieve me at that hour.

He will turn out the cook and the steward at four, I concluded, and then give you a call. Of course at the slightest sign of any sort of wind we’ll have the hands up and make a start at once.

He concealed his astonishment. Very well, sir. Outside the cuddy he put his head in the second mate’s door to inform him of my unheard-of caprice to take a five hours anchor watch on myself. I heard the other raise his voice incredulously. What? The Captain himself? Then a few more murmurs, a door closed, then another. A few moments later I went on deck.

My strangeness, which had made me sleepless, had prompted that unconventional arrangement, as if I had expected in those solitary hours of the night to get on terms with the ship of which I knew nothing, manned by men of whom I knew very little more. Fast alongside a wharf, littered like any ship in port with a tangle of unrelated things, invaded by unrelated shore people, I had hardly seen her yet properly. Now, as she lay cleared for sea, the stretch of her main deck seemed to me very fine under the stars. Very fine, very roomy for her size, and very inviting. I

descended the poop and paced the waist, my mind picturing to myself the coming passage through the Malay Archipelago, down the Indian Ocean, and up the Atlantic. All its phases were familiar enough to me, every characteristic, all the alternatives which were likely to face me on the high seas—everything! except the novel responsibility of command. But I took heart from the reasonable thought that the ship was like other ships, the men like other men, and that the sea was not likely to keep any special surprises expressly for my discomfiture.

Arrived at that comforting conclusion, I bethought myself of a cigar and went below to get it. All was still down there. Everybody at the after end of the ship was sleeping profoundly. I came out again on the quarter deck, agreeably at ease in my sleeping suit on that warm breathless night, barefooted, a glowing cigar in my teeth, and, going forward, I was met by the profound silence of the fore end of the ship. Only as I passed the door of the fore-castle I heard a deep, quiet, trustful sigh of some sleeper inside. And suddenly I rejoiced in the great security of the sea as compared with the uniest of the land, in my choice of that untempted life presenting no disquieting problems, invested with an elementary moral beauty by the absolute straightforwardness of its appeal and by the singleness of its purpose.

The riding light in the fore-rigging burned with a clear, untroubled, as if symbolic, flame, confident and bright in the mysterious shades of the night. Passing on my way aft along the other side of the ship, I observed that the rope side ladder, put over, no doubt for the master of the tug when he came to fetch away our letters, had not been hauled in as it should have been. I became annoyed at this, for exactitude in small matters is the very soul of discipline. Then I reflected that I had myself peremptorily dismissed my officers from duty, and by my own act had prevented the anchor watch being formally set and things properly attended to. I asked myself whether it was wise ever to interfere with the established routine of duties even from the kindest of motives. My action might have made me appear eccentric. Goodness only knew how that absurdly whiskered mate would account for my conduct, and what the whole ship thought of that informality of their new captain. I was vexed with myself.

Not from compunction certainly, but, as it were mechanically, I proceeded to get the ladder in myself. Now a side ladder of that sort is a light affair and comes in easily, yet my vigorous tug, which should have brought it flying on board, merely recoiled upon my body in a totally unexpected jerk. What the devil!

I was so astounded by the immovableness of that ladder that I remained stock still, trying to account for it to myself like that imbecile mate of mine. In the end, of course, I put my head over the rail.

The side of the ship made an opaque belt of shadow on the darkling glassy shimmer of the sea. But I saw at once something elongated and pale floating very close to the ladder. Before I could form a guess a faint flash of phosphorescent light, which seemed to issue suddenly from the naked body of a man, flickered in the sleeping water with the elusive, silent play of summer lightning in a night sky. With a gasp I saw revealed to my stare a pair of feet, the long legs, a broad livid back immersed right up to the neck in a greenish cadaverous glow. One hand, awash, clutched the bottom rung of the ladder. He was complete but for the head. A headless corpse! The cigar dropped out of my gaping mouth with a tiny plop and a short hiss quite audible in the absolute stillness of all things under heaven. At that I suppose he raised up his face, a dimly pale oval in the shadow of the ship's side. But even then I could only barely make out down there the shape of his blackhaired head. However, it was enough for the horrid, frost-bound sensation which had gripped me about the chest to pass off. The moment of vain exclamations was past, too. I only climbed on the spare spar and leaned over the rail as far as I could, to bring my eyes nearer to that mystery floating alongside.

As he hung by the ladder, like a resting swimmer, the sea lightning played about his limbs at every stir, and he appeared in it ghastly, silvery, fishlike. He remained as mute as a fish, too. He made no motion to get out of the water, either. It was inconceivable that he should not attempt to come on board, and strangely troubling to suspect that perhaps he did not want to. And my first words were prompted by just that troubled uncertainty.

What's the matter? I asked in my ordinary tone, speaking down to the face upturned exactly under mine

Cramp, it answered, no louder Then slightly anxious, I say, no need to call anyone

I was not going to, I said

Are you alone on deck?

Yes

I had somehow the impression that he was on the point of letting go the ladder to swim away beyond my ken—mysterious as he came But, for the moment, this being appearing as if he had risen from the bottom of the sea (it was certainly the nearest land to the ship) wanted only to know the time I told him And he, down there, tentatively

'I suppose your captain's turned in?

I am sure he isn't, I said

He seemed to struggle with himself, for I heard something like the low, bitter murmur of doubt What's the good? His next words came out with a hesitating effort

Look here, my man Could you call him out quietly?

I thought the time had come to declare myself

I am the captain

I heard a 'By Jove!' whispered at the level of the water The phosphorescence flashed in the swirl of the water all about his limbs, his other hand seized the ladder

My name's Leggatt

The voice was calm and resolute A good voice The self-possession of that man had somehow induced a corresponding state in myself It was very quietly that I remarked

You must be a good swimmer

Yes I've been in the water practically since nine o'clock The question for me now is whether I am to let go this ladder and go on swimming till I sink from exhaustion, or—to come on board here

I felt this was no mere formula of desperate speech, but a real alternative in the view of a strong soul I should have gathered from this that he was young, indeed, it is only the young who are ever confronted by such clear issues But at the time it was pure intuition on my part A mysterious communication was estab-

lished already between us two—in the face of that silent, darkened tropical sea I was young, too, young enough to make no comment. The man in the water began suddenly to climb up the ladder, and I hastened away from the rail to fetch some clothes.

Before entering the cabin I stood still, listening in the lobby at the foot of the stairs. A faint snore came through the closed door of the chief mate's room. The second mate's door was on the hook, but the darkness in there was absolutely soundless. He, too, was young and could sleep like a stone. Remained the steward, but he was not likely to wake up before he was called. I got a sleeping suit out of my room and, coming back on deck, saw the naked man from the sea sitting on the main hatch, glimmering white in the darkness, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. In a moment he had concealed his damp body in a sleeping suit of the same gray-stripe pattern as the one I was wearing and followed me like my double on the poop. Together we moved right aft, barefooted, silent.

What is it? I asked in a deadened voice, taking the lighted lamp out of the binnacle, and raising it to his face.

An ugly business.

He had rather regular features, a good mouth, light eyes under somewhat heavy, dark eyebrows, a smooth, square forehead, no growth on his cheeks, a small, brown mustache, and a well-shaped, round chin. His expression was concentrated, meditative under the inspecting light of the lamp I held up to his face, such as a man thinking hard in solitude might wear. My sleeping suit was just right for his size. A well-knit young fellow of twenty-five at most. He caught his lower lip with the edge of white, even teeth.

'Yes,' I said, replacing the lamp in the binnacle. The warm, heavy tropical night closed upon his head again.

There's a ship over there, he murmured.

Yes, I know. The *Sephora*. Did you know of us?

Hadn't the slightest idea. I am the mate of her—— He paused and corrected himself. I should say I *was*.

Aha! Something wrong?

Yes. Very wrong indeed. I've killed a man."

'What do you mean? Just now?'

No, on the passage Weeks ago Thirty nine south When I say
a man——

Fit of temper, I suggested, confidently

The shadowy, dark head, like mine, seemed to nod imperceptibly
above the ghostly gray of my sleeping suit It was, in the night,
as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths
of a somber and immense mirror

A pretty thing to have to own up to for a Conway boy, murmured my double, distinctly

You're a Conway boy?

I am, he said, as if startled Then, slowly Perhaps you
too——

It was so, but being a couple of years older I had left before
he joined After a quick interchange of dates a silence fell, and
I thought suddenly of my absurd mate with his terrific whiskers
and the Bless my soul—you don't say so type of intellect My
double gave me an inkling of his thoughts by saying

My father's a parson in Norfolk Do you see me before a judge
and jury on that charge? For myself I can't see the necessity There
are fellows that an angel from heaven—— And I am not that He
was one of those creatures that are just simmering all the time
with a silly sort of wickedness Miserable devils that have no
business to live at all He wouldn't do his duty and wouldn't let
anybody else do theirs But what's the good of talking! You know
well enough the sort of ill conditioned snarling cur——

He appealed to me as if our experiences had been as identical
as our clothes And I knew well enough the pestiferous danger of
such a character where there are no means of legal repression And
I knew well enough also that my double there was no homicidal
ruffian I did not think of asking him for details, and he told me
the story roughly in brusque, disconnected sentences I needed no
more I saw it all going on as though I were myself inside that
other sleeping suit

It happened while we were setting a reefed foresail, at dusk
Reefed foresail! You understand the sort of weather The only
sail we had left to keep the ship running, so you may guess what
it had been like for days Anxious sort of job, that He gave me
some of his cursed insolence at the sheet I tell you I was over-

done with this terrific weather that seemed to have no end to it. Terrific, I tell you—and a deep ship I believe the fellow himself was half crazed with funk. It was no time for gentlemanly reproof, so I turned round and felled him like an ox. He up and at me. We closed just as an awful sea made for the ship. All hands saw it coming and took to the rigging, but I had him by the throat, and went on shaking him like a rat, the men above us yelling, Look out! look out! Then a crash as if the sky had fallen on my head. They say that for over ten minutes hardly anything was to be seen of the ship—just the three masts and a bit of the forecastle head and of the poop all awash driving along in a smother of foam. It was a miracle that they found us jammed together behind the forebits. It's clear that I meant business, because I was holding him by the throat still when they picked us up. He was black in the face. It was too much for them. It seems they rushed us aft together, gripped as we were, screaming Murder! like a lot of lunatics, and broke into the cuddy. And the ship running for her life, touch and go all the time, any minute her last in a sea fit to turn your hair gray only a looking at it. I understand that the skipper, too, started raving like the rest of them. The man had been deprived of sleep for more than a week, and to have this sprung on him at the height of a furious gale nearly drove him out of his mind. I wonder they didn't fling me overboard after getting the carcass of their precious shipmate out of my fingers. They had rather a job to separate us, I've been told. A sufficiently fierce story to make an old judge and a respectable jury sit up a bit. The first thing I heard when I came to myself was the maddening howling of that endless gale, and on that the voice of the old man. He was hanging on to my bunk, staring into my face out of his sou'wester.

Mr Leggatt, you have killed a man. You can act no longer as chief mate of this ship.

His care to subdue his voice made it sound monotonous. He rested a hand on the end of the skylight to steady himself with, and all that time did not stir a limb, so far as I could see. Nice little tale for a quiet tea party, he concluded in the same tone.

One of my hands, too, rested on the end of the skylight, neither did I stir a limb, so far as I knew. We stood less than a foot from

each other. It occurred to me that if old Bless my soul—you don't say so—were to put his head up the companion and catch sight of us, he would think he was seeing double, or imagine himself come upon a scene of weird witchcraft, the strange captain having a quiet confabulation by the wheel with his own gray ghost. I became very much concerned to prevent anything of the sort. I heard the other's soothing undertone.

My father's a parson in Norfolk, it said. Evidently he had forgotten he had told me this important fact before. Truly a nice little tale.

You had better slip down into my stateroom now, I said, moving off stealthily. My double followed my movements, our bare feet made no sound, I let him in, closed the door with care, and, after giving a call to the second mate, returned on deck for my relief.

Not much sign of any wind yet, I remarked when he approached.

No, sir. Not much, he assented, sleepily, in his hoarse voice, with just enough deference, no more, and barely suppressing a yawn.

Well, that's all you have to look out for. You have got your orders.

Yes, sir.

I paced a turn or two on the poop and saw him take up his position face forward with his elbow in the ratlines of the mizzen-rigging before I went below. The mate's faint snoring was still going on peacefully. The cuddy lamp was burning over the table on which stood a vase with flowers, a polite attention from the ship's provision merchant—the last flowers we should see for the next three months at the very least. Two bunches of bananas hung from the beam symmetrically, one on each side of the rudder casing. Everything was as before in the ship—except that two of her captain's sleeping suits were simultaneously in use, one motionless in the cuddy, the other keeping very still in the captain's stateroom.

It must be explained here that my cabin had the form of the capital letter L, the door being within the angle and opening into the short part of the letter. A couch was to the left, the bed place

to the right, my writing desk and the chronometers table faced the door. But anyone opening it, unless he stepped right inside, had no view of what I call the long (or vertical) part of the letter. It contained some lockers surmounted by a book case, and a few clothes, a thick jacket or two, caps, oilskin coat, and such like, hung on hooks. There was at the bottom of that part a door opening into my bathroom, which could be entered also directly from the saloon. But that way was never used.

The mysterious arrival had discovered the advantage of this particular shape. Entering my room, lighted strongly by a big bulkhead lamp swung on gimbals above my writing desk, I did not see him anywhere till he stepped out quietly from behind the coats hung in the recessed part.

I heard somebody moving about, and went in there at once,' he whispered.

I, too, spoke under my breath.

Nobody is likely to come in here without knocking and getting permission.

He nodded. His face was thin and the sunburn faded, as though he had been ill. And no wonder. He had been, I heard presently, kept under arrest in his cabin for nearly seven weeks. But there was nothing sickly in his eyes or in his expression. He was not a bit like me, really; yet, as we stood leaning over my bed-place, whispering side by side, with our dark heads together and our backs to the door, anybody bold enough to open it stealthily would have been treated to the uncanny sight of a double captain busy talking in whispers with his other self.

But all this doesn't tell me how you came to hang on to our side ladder, I inquired, in the hardly audible murmurs we used, after he had told me something more of the proceedings on board the *Sephora* once the bad weather was over.

When we sighted Java Head I had had time to think all those matters out several times over. I had six weeks of doing nothing else, and with only an hour or so every evening for a tramp on the quarter deck.

He whispered, his arms folded on the side of my bed place, staring through the open port. And I could imagine perfectly the manner of this thinking out—a stubborn if not a steadfast opera-

tion, something of which I should have been perfectly incapable

I reckoned it would be dark before we closed with the land, he continued, so low that I had to strain my hearing, near as we were to each other, shoulder touching shoulder almost. So I asked to speak to the old man. He always seemed very sick when he came to see me—as if he could not look me in the face. You know, that foresail saved the ship. She was too deep to have run long under bare poles. And it was I that managed to set it for him. Anyway, he came. When I had him in my cabin—he stood by the door looking at me as if I had the halter around my neck already—I asked him right away to leave my cabin door unlocked at night while the ship was going through Sunda Straits. There would be the Java coast within two or three miles, off Angier Point. I wanted nothing more. I've had a prize for swimming my second year in the Conway.

I can believe it, I breathed out.

God only knows why they locked me in every night. To see some of their faces you'd have thought they were afraid I'd go about at night strangling people. Am I a murdering brute? Do I look it? By Jove! if I had been he wouldn't have trusted himself like that into my room. You'll say I might have chucked him aside and bolted out, there and then—it was dark already. Well, no. And for the same reason I wouldn't think of trying to smash the door. There would have been a rush to stop me at the noise, and I did not mean to get into a confounded scrimmage. Somebody else might have got killed—for I would not have broken out only to get chucked back, and I did not want any more of that work. He refused, looking more sick than ever. He was afraid of the men, and also of that old second mate of his who had been sailing with him for years—a gray-headed old humbug, and his steward, too, had been with him devil knows how long—seventeen years or more—a dogmatic sort of loafer who hated me like poison, just because I was the chief mate. No chief mate ever made more than one voyage in the *Sephora*, you know. Those two old chaps ran the ship. Devil only knows what the skipper wasn't afraid of (all his nerve went to pieces altogether in that hellish spell of bad weather we had)—of what the law would do to him—of his wife, perhaps. Oh, yes! she's on board. Though I

don't think she would have meddled. She would have been only too glad to have me out of the ship in any way. The brand of Cain business, don't you see? That's all right. I was ready enough to go off wandering on the face of the earth—and that was price enough to pay for an Abel of that sort. Anyhow, he wouldn't listen to me. This thing must take its course. I represent the law here. He was shaking like a leaf. So you won't? No! Then I hope you will be able to sleep on that, I said, and turned my back on him. I wonder that *you* can, cries he, and locks the door.

Well, after that, I couldn't. Not very well. That was three weeks ago. We have had a slow passage through the Java Sea, drifted about Carimata for ten days. When we anchored here they thought, I suppose, it was all right. The nearest land (and that's five miles) is the ship's destination, the consul would soon set about catching me, and there would have been no object in bolting to these islets there. I don't suppose there's a drop of water on them. I don't know how it was, but tonight that steward, after bringing me my supper, went out to let me eat it, and left the door unlocked. And I ate it—all there was, too. After I had finished I strolled out on the quarter-deck. I don't know that I meant to do anything. A breath of fresh air was all I wanted, I believe. Then a sudden temptation came over me. I kicked off my slippers and was in the water before I had made up my mind fairly. Somebody heard the splash and they raised an awful hullabaloo. He's gone! Lower the boats! He's committed suicide! No, he's swimming. Certainly I was swimming. It's not so easy for a swimmer like me to commit suicide by drowning. I landed on the nearest islet before the boat left the ship's side. I heard them pulling about in the dark, hailing, and so on, but after a bit they gave up. Everything quieted down and the anchorage became as still as death. I sat down on a stone and began to think. I felt certain they would start searching for me at daylight. There was no place to hide on those stony things—and if there had been, what would have been the good? But now I was clear of that ship, I was not going back. So after a while I took off all my clothes, tied them up in a bundle with a stone inside, and dropped them in the deep water on the outer side of that islet. That was suicide enough for me. Let them think what they

liked, but I didn't mean to drown myself I meant to swim till I sank—but that's not the same thing I struck out for another of these little islands, and it was from that one that I first saw your riding light Something to swim for I went on easily, and on the way I came upon a flat rock a foot or two above water In the daytime, I dare say, you might make it out with a glass from your poop I scrambled up on it and rested myself for a bit Then I made another start That last spell must have been over a mile

His whisper was getting fainter and fainter, and all the time he stared straight out through the porthole, in which there was not even a star to be seen I had not interrupted him There was something that made comment impossible in his narrative, or perhaps in himself, a sort of feeling, a quality, which I can't find a name for And when he ceased, all I found was a futile whisper

So you swam for our light?

Yes—straight for it It was something to swim for I couldn't see any stars low down because the coast was in the way, and I couldn't see the land, either The water was like glass One might have been swimming in a confounded thousand feet deep cistern with no place for scrambling out anywhere, but what I didn't like was the notion of swimming round and round like a crazed bullock before I gave out, and as I didn't mean to go back

No Do you see me being hauled back, stark naked, off one of these little islands by the scruff of the neck and fighting like a wild beast? Somebody would have got killed for certain, and I did not want any of that So I went on Then your ladder—'

Why didn't you hail the ship? I asked, a little louder He touched my shoulder lightly Lazy footsteps came right over our heads and stopped The second mate had crossed from the other side of the poop and might have been hanging over the rail, for all we knew

He couldn't hear us talking—could he?' My double-breathed into my very ear, anxiously

His anxiety was an answer, a sufficient answer, to the question I had put to him An answer containing all the difficulty of that situation I closed the porthole quietly, to make sure A louder word might have been overheard

Who's that? he whispered then

My second mate But I don't know much more of the fellow than you do

And I told him a little about myself I had been appointed to take charge while I least expected anything of the sort, not quite a fortnight ago I didn't know either the ship or the people Hadn't had the time in port to look about me or size anybody up And as to the crew all they knew was that I was appointed to take the ship home For the rest, I was almost as much of a stranger on board as himself, I said And at the moment I felt it most acutely I felt that it would take very little to make me a suspect person in the eyes of the ship's company

He had turned about meantime, and we, the two strangers in the ship, faced each other in identical attitudes

Your ladder—— he murmured, after a silence Who'd have thought of finding a ladder hanging over at night in a ship anchored out here! I felt just then a very unpleasant faintness After the life I've been leading for nine weeks, anybody would have got out of condition I wasn't capable of swimming round as far as your rudder chains And, lo and behold! there was a ladder to get hold of After I gripped it I said to myself, What's the good? When I saw a man's head looking over I thought I would swim away presently and leave him shouting—in whatever language it was I didn't mind being looked at I—I liked it And then you speaking to me so quietly—as if you had expected me—made me hold on a little longer It had been a confounded lonely time—I don't mean while swimming I was glad to talk a little to somebody that didn't belong to the *Sephora* As to asking for the captain, that was a mere impulse It could have been no use, with all the ship knowing about me and the other people pretty certain to be round here in the morning I don't know—I wanted to be seen, to talk with somebody, before I went on I don't know what I would have said Fine night, isn't it? or something of the sort

Do you think they will be round here presently? I asked with some incredulity

Quite likely, he said, faintly

He looked extremely haggard all of a sudden His head rolled on his shoulders

'Hm We shall see then Meantime get into that bed, I whispered Want help? There'

It was a rather high bed-place with a set of drawers underneath This amazing swimmer really needed the lift I gave him by seizing his leg He tumbled in, rolled over on his back, and flung one arm across his eyes And then, with his face nearly hidden, he must have looked exactly as I used to look in that bed I gazed upon my other self for a while before drawing across carefully the two green serge curtains which ran on a brass rod I thought for a moment of pinning them together for greater safety, but I sat down on the couch, and once there I felt unwilling to rise and hunt for a pin I would do it in a moment I was extremely tired, in a peculiarly intimate way, by the strain of stealthiness, by the effort of whispering and the general secrecy of this excitement It was three o'clock by now and I had been on my feet since nine, but I was not sleepy, I could not have gone to sleep I sat there, fagged out looking at the curtains, trying to clear my mind of the confused sensation of being in two places at once, and greatly bothered by an exasperating knocking in my head It was a relief to discover suddenly that it was not in my head at all, but on the outside of the door Before I could collect myself the words Come in were out of my mouth, and the steward entered with a tray, bringing in my morning coffee I had slept, after all, and I was so frightened that I shouted, This way! I am here, steward, as though he had been miles away He put down the tray on the table next the couch and only then said, very quietly, I can see you are here, sir I felt him give me a keen look, but I dared not meet his eyes just then He must have wondered why I had drawn the curtains of my bed before going to sleep on the couch He went out, hooking the door open as usual

I heard the crew washing decks above me I knew I would have been told at once if there had been any wind Calm, I thought, and I was doubly vexed Indeed, I felt dual more than ever The steward reappeared suddenly in the doorway I jumped up from the couch so quickly that he gave a start

What do you want here?

Close your port, sir—they are washing decks

It is closed, I said, reddening

Very well, sir But he did not move from the doorway and returned my stare in an extraordinary, equivocal manner for a time Then his eyes wavered, all his expression changed, and in a voice unusually gentle, almost coaxingly

May I come in to take the empty cup away, sir?

Of course! I turned my back on him while he popped in and out Then I unhooked and closed the door and even pushed the bolt This sort of thing could not go on very long The cabin was as hot as an oven, too I took a peep at my double, and discovered that he had not moved, his arm was till over his eyes, but his chest heaved, his hair was wet, his chin glistened with perspiration I reached over him and opened the port

I must show myself on deck, I reflected

Of course, theoretically, I could do what I liked, with no one to say nay to me within the whole circle of the horizon, but to lock my cabin door and take the key away I did not dare Directly I put my head out of the companionway I saw the group of my two officers, the second mate barefooted, the chief mate in long india rubber boots, near the break of the poop, and the steward halfway down the poop ladder talking to them eagerly He happened to catch sight of me and dived, the second ran down on the main deck shouting some order or other, and the chief mate came to meet me, touching his cap

There was a sort of curiosity in his eye that I did not like I don't know whether the steward had told them that I was queer only, or downright drunk, but I know the man meant to have a good look at me I watched him coming with a smile which, as he got into point-blank range, took effect and froze his very whiskers I did not give him time to open his lips

Square the yards by lifts and biaces before the hands go to breakfast

It was the first particular order I had given on board that ship, and I stayed on deck to see it executed, too I had felt the need of asserting myself without loss of time That sneering young cub got taken down a peg or two on that occasion, and I also seized the opportunity of having a good look at the face of every fore mast man as they filed past me to go to the after braces At breakfast time, eating nothing myself, I presided with such frigid

dignity that the two mates were only too glad to escape from the cabin as soon as decency permitted, and all the time the dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity. I was constantly watching myself, my secret self, as dependent on my actions as my own personality, sleeping in that bed, behind that door which faced me as I sat at the head of the table. It was very much like being mad, only it was worse because one was aware of it.

I had to shake him for a solid minute, but when at last he opened his eyes it was in the full possession of his senses, with an inquiring look.

All's well so far, I whispered. Now you must vanish into the bathroom.

He did so, as noiseless as a ghost, and I then rang for the steward, and facing him boldly, directed him to tidy up my stateroom while I was having my bath—and be quick about it. As my tone admitted of no excuses, he said, Yes, sir, and ran off to fetch his dustpan and brushes. I took a bath and did most of my dressing, splashing, and whistling softly for the steward's edification, while the secret sharer of my life stood drawn up bolt upright in that little space, his face looking very sunken in daylight, his eyelids lowered under the stern, dark line of his eyebrows drawn together by a slight frown.

When I left him there to go back to my room the steward was finishing dusting. I sent for the mate and engaged him in some insignificant conversation. It was, as it were, trifling with the terrific character of his whiskers, but my object was to give him an opportunity for a good look at my cabin. And then I could at last shut, with a clear conscience, the door of my stateroom and get my double back into the recessed part. There was nothing else for it. He had to sit still on a small folding stool, half smothered by the heavy coats hanging there. We listened to the steward going into the bathroom out of the saloon, filling the water bottles there, scrubbing the bath, setting things to rights, whisk, bang, clatter—out again into the saloon—turn the key—click. Such was my scheme for keeping my second self invisible. Nothing better could be contrived under the circumstances. And there we sat, I at my writing desk ready to appear busy with some papers, he behind

me, out of sight of the door. It would not have been prudent to talk in daytime, and I could not have stood the excitement of that queer sense of whispering to myself. Now and then, glancing over my shoulder, I saw him far back there, sitting rigidly on the low stool, his bare feet close together, his arms folded, his head hanging on his breast—and perfectly still. Anybody would have taken him for me.

I was fascinated by it myself. Every moment I had to glance over my shoulder. I was looking at him when a voice outside the door said:

Beg pardon, sir.

Well! I kept my eyes on him, and so, when the voice outside the door announced, 'There's a ship's boat coming our way, sir,' I saw him give a start—the first movement he had made for hours. But he did not raise his bowed head.

All right. Get the ladder over.

I hesitated. Should I whisper something to him? But what? His immobility seemed to have been never disturbed. What could I tell him he did not know already? Finally I went on deck.

II

The skipper of the *Sephora* had a thin red whisker all round his face, and the sort of complexion that goes with hair of that color, also the particular, rather smeary shade of blue in the eyes. He was not exactly a showy figure, his shoulders were high, his stature but middling—one leg slightly more bandy than the other. He shook hands, looking vaguely around. A spuitless tenacity was his main characteristic, I judged. I behaved with a politeness which seemed to disconcert him. Perhaps he was shy. He mumbled to me as if he were ashamed of what he was saying, gave his name (it was something like Archbold—but at this distance of years I hardly am sure), his ship's name, and a few other particulars of that sort, in the manner of a criminal making a reluctant and doleful confession. He had had terrible weather on the passage out—terrible—terrible—wife aboard, too.

By this time we were seated in the cabin and the steward

brought in a tray with a bottle and glasses Thanks! No Never took liquor Would have some water, though He drank two tumblerfuls Terrible thirsty work Ever since daylight had been exploring the islands round his ship

What was that for—fun? I asked, with an appearance of polite interest

No! He sighed Painful duty

As he persisted in his mumbling and I wanted my double to hear every word, I hit upon the notion of informing him that I regretted to say I was hard of hearing

Such a young man, too! he nodded keeping his smeary blue, unintelligent eyes fastened upon me What was the cause of it—some disease? he inquired, without the least sympathy and as if he thought that, if so, I d got no more than I deserved

Yes, disease I admitted in a cheerful tone which seemed to shock him But my point was gained, because he had to raise his voice to give me his tale It is not worth while to record that version It was just over two months since all this had happened, and he had thought so much about it that he seemed completely muddled as to its bearings, but still immensely impressed

What would you think of such a thing happening on board your own ship? I ve had the *Sephora* for these fifteen years I am a well known shipmaster

He was densely distressed—and perhaps I should have sympathized with him if I had been able to detach my mental vision from the unsuspected sharer of my cabin as though he were my second self There he was on the other side of the bulkhead, four or five feet from us no more, as we sat in the saloon I looked politely at Captain Archbold (if that was his name), but it was the other I saw, in a gray sleeping suit, seated on a low stool, his bare feet close together, his arms folded, and every word said between us falling into the ears of his dark head bowed on his chest

I have been at sea now, man and boy, for seven and-thirty years, and I ve never heard of such a thing happening in an English ship And that it should be my ship Wife on board, too

I was hardly listening to him

‘Don t you think, I said, that the heavy sea which, you told

me, came aboard just then might have killed the man? I have seen the sheer weight of a sea kill a man very neatly, by simply breaking his neck

Good God! he uttered, impressively, fixing his smeary blue eyes on me. The sea! No man killed by the sea ever looked like that. He seemed positively scandalized at my suggestion. And as I gazed at him, certainly not prepared for anything original on his part, he advanced his head close to mine and thrust his tongue out at me so suddenly that I couldn't help starting back.

After scoring over my calmness in this graphic way he nodded wisely. If I had seen the sight, he assured me, I would never forget it as long as I lived. The weather was too bad to give the corpse a proper sea burial. So next day at dawn they took it up on the poop, covering its face with a bit of bunting, he read a short prayer, and then, just as it was, in its oilskins and long boots, they launched it amongst those mountainous seas that seemed ready every moment to swallow up the ship herself and the terrified lives on board of her.

That reefed foresail saved you, I threw in.

Under God—it did, he exclaimed fervently. It was by a special mercy, I firmly believe, that it stood some of those hurricane squalls.

It was the setting of that sail which—— I began.

God's own hand in it, he interrupted me. Nothing less could have done it. I don't mind telling you that I hardly dared give the order. It seemed impossible that we could touch anything without losing it, and then our last hope would have been gone.

The terror of that gale was on him yet. I let him go on for a bit, then said, casually—as if returning to a minor subject.

You were very anxious to give up your mate to the shore people, I believe?

He was. To the law. His obscure tenacity on that point had in it something incomprehensible and a little awful, something, as it were, mystical, quite apart from his anxiety that he should not be suspected of countenancing any doings of that sort. Seven-and-thirty virtuous years at sea, of which over twenty of immaculate command, and the last fifteen in the *Sephora*, seemed to have laid him under some pitiless obligation.

And you know," he went on, groping shamefacedly among his feelings, I did not engage that young fellow His people had some interest with my owners I was in a way forced to take him on He looked very smart, very gentlemanly, and all that But do you know—I never liked him, somehow I am a plain man You see, he wasn't exactly the sort for the chief mate of a ship like the *Sephora*

I had become so connected in thoughts and impressions with the secret sharer of my cabin that I felt as if I, personally, were being given to understand that I, too, was not the sort that would have done for the chief mate of a ship like the *Sephora* I had no doubt of it in my mind

Not at all the style of man You understand, he insisted, superfluously, looking hard at me

I smiled urbanely He seemed at a loss for a while

'I suppose I must report a suicide

Beg pardon?

Suicide! That's what I'll have to write to my owners directly I get in

Unless you manage to recover him before tomorrow, I assented, dispassionately I mean, alive

He mumbled something which I really did not catch, and I turned my ear to him in a puzzled manner He fairly bawled

The land—I say, the mainland is at least seven miles off my anchorage

About that '

My lack of excitement, of curiosity, of surprise, of any sort of pronounced interest, began to arouse his distrust But except for the felicitous pretense of deafness I had not tried to pretend anything I had felt utterly incapable of playing the part of ignorance properly, and therefore was afraid to try It is also certain that he had brought some ready-made suspicions with him, and that he viewed my politeness as a strange and unnatural phenomenon And yet how else could I have received him? Not heartily! That was impossible for psychological reasons which I need not state here My only object was to keep off his inquiries Surlily? Yes, but surliness might have provoked a point blank question From its novelty to him and from its nature, punctilious courtesy was the

manner best calculated to restrain the man. But there was the danger of his breaking through my defense bluntly. I could not, I think, have met him by a direct lie, also for psychological (not moral) reasons. If he had only known how afraid I was of his putting my feeling of identity with the other to the test! But, strangely enough—(I thought of it only afterward)—I believe that he was not a little disconcerted by the reverse side of that weird situation, by something in me that reminded him of the man he was seeking—suggested a mysterious similitude to the young fellow he had distrusted and disliked from the first.

However that might have been, the silence was not very prolonged. He took another oblique step.

I reckon I had no more than a two-mile pull to your ship. Not a bit more.

And quite enough, too, in this awful heat,' I said.

Another pause full of mistrust followed. Necessity, they say, is mother of invention, but fear, too, is not barren of ingenious suggestions. And I was afraid he would ask me point blank for news of my other self.

Nice little saloon, isn't it? I remarked, as if noticing for the first time the way his eyes roamed from one closed door to the other. And very well fitted out, too. Here, for instance, I continued, reaching over the back of my seat negligently and flinging the door open, is my bathroom.

He made an eager movement, but hardly gave it a glance. I got up, shut the door of the bathroom, and invited him to have a look round, as if I were very proud of my accommodation. He had to rise and be shown round, but he went through the business without any raptures whatever.

And now we'll have a look at my stateroom, I declared, in a voice as loud as I dared to make it, crossing the cabin to the starboard side with purposely heavy steps.

He followed me in and gazed around. My intelligent double had vanished. I played my part.

Very convenient—isn't it?

Very nice. Very comfortable. He didn't finish, and went out brusquely as if to escape from some unrighteous wiles of mine. But it was not to be. I had been too frightened not to feel venge-

ful, I felt I had him on the run, and I meant to keep him on the run. My polite insistence must have had something menacing in it, because he gave in suddenly. And I did not let him off a single item, mate's room, pantry, storerooms, the very sail locker which was also under the poop—he had to look into them all. When at last I showed him out on the quarter-deck he drew a long, spiritless sigh, and mumbled dismally that he must really be going back to his ship now. I desired my mate, who had joined us, to see to the captain's boat.

The man of whiskers gave a blast on the whistle which he used to wear hanging round his neck, and yelled, *Sephora's* away! My double down there in my cabin must have heard, and certainly could not feel more relieved than I. Four fellows came running out from somewhere forward and went over the side, while my own men, appearing on deck too, lined the rail. I escorted my visitor to the gangway ceremoniously, and nearly overdid it. He was a tenacious beast. On the very ladder he lingered, and in that unique, guiltily conscientious manner of sticking to the point

I say you you don't think that——

I covered his voice loudly

Certainly not I am delighted. Good by

I had an idea of what he meant to say, and just saved myself by the privilege of defective hearing. He was too shaken generally to insist, but my mate, close witness of that parting, looked mystified and his face took on a thoughtful cast. As I did not want to appear as if I wished to avoid all communication with my officers, he had the opportunity to address me.

Seems a very nice man. His boat's crew told our chaps a very extraordinary story, if what I am told by the steward is true. I suppose you had it from the captain, sir?

Yes. I had a story from the captain.

A very horrible affair—isn't it, sir?

It is.

"Beats all these tales we hear about murders in Yankee ships.

I don't think it beats them. I don't think it resembles them in the least.

Bless my soul—you don't say so! But of course I've no acquaintance whatever with American ships, not I, so I couldn't go against

your knowledge It's horrible enough for me But the queerest part is that those fellows seemed to have some idea the man was hidden aboard here They had really Did you ever hear of such a thing?

Preposterous—isn't it?

We were walking to and fro athwart the quarterdeck No one of the crew forward could be seen (the day was Sunday), and the mate pursued

There was some little dispute about it Our chaps took offense As if we would harbor a thing like that, they said Wouldn't you like to look for him in our coal hole? Quite a tiff But they made it up in the end I suppose he did drown himself Don't you, sir?

I don't suppose anything

You have no doubt in the matter, sir?

None whatever

I left him suddenly I felt I was producing a bad impression, but with my double down there it was most trying to be on deck And it was almost as trying to be below Altogether a nerve-trying situation But on the whole I felt less torn in two when I was with him There was no one in the whole ship whom I dared take into my confidence Since the hands had got to know his story, it would have been impossible to pass him off for anyone else, and an accidental discovery was to be dreaded now more than ever

The steward being engaged in laying the table for dinner, we could talk only with our eyes when I first went down Later in the afternoon we had a cautious try at whispering The Sunday quietness of the ship was against us, the stillness of air and water around her was against us, the elements, the men were against us—everything was against us in our secret partnership, time itself—for this could not go on forever The very trust in Providence was, I suppose, denied to his guilt Shall I confess that this thought cast me down very much? And as to the chapter of accidents which counts for so much in the book of success, I could only hope that it was closed For what favorable accident could be expected?

'Did you hear everything?' were my first words as soon as we took up our position side by side, leaning over my bed place

He had. And the proof of it was his earnest whisper, 'The man told you he hardly dared to give the order'

I understood the reference to be to that saving foresail

Yes. He was afraid of it being lost in the setting

I assure you he never gave the order. He may think he did, but he never gave it. He stood there with me on the break of the poop after the maintopsail blew away, and whimpered about our last hope—positively whimpered about it and nothing else—and the night coming on! To hear one's skipper go on like that in such weather was enough to drive any fellow out of his mind. It worked me up into a sort of desperation. I just took it into my own hands and went away from him, boiling, and— But what's the use telling you? *You* know! Do you think that if I had not been pretty fierce with them I should have got the men to do anything? Not it! The boss'n perhaps? Perhaps! It wasn't a heavy sea—it was a sea gone mad! I suppose the end of the world will be something like that, and a man may have the heart to see it coming once and be done with it—but to have to face it day after day—I don't blame anybody. I was precious little better than the rest. Only—I was an officer of that old coal wagon, anyhow—

I quite understand, I conveyed that sincere assurance into his ear. He was out of breath with whispering. I could hear him pant slightly. It was all very simple. The same strung up force which had given twenty-four men a chance, at least, for their lives, had, in a sort of recoil, crushed an unworthy mutinous existence.

But I had no leisure to weigh the merits of the matter—footsteps in the saloon, a heavy knock. There's enough wind to get under way with, sir. Here was the call of a new claim upon my thoughts and even upon my feelings.

Turn the hands up, I cried through the door. I'll be on deck directly.

I was going out to make the acquaintance of my ship. Before I left the cabin our eyes met—the eyes of the only two strangers on board. I pointed to the recessed part where the little camp-

stool awaited him and laid my finger on my lips. He made a gesture—somewhat vague—a little mysterious, accompanied by a faint smile, as if of regret.

This is not the place to enlarge upon the sensations of a man who feels for the first time a ship move under his feet to his own independent word. In my case they were not unalloyed. I was not wholly alone with my command, for there was that stranger in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly with her. Part of me was absent. That mental feeling of being in two places at once affected me physically as if the mood of secrecy had penetrated my very soul. Before an hour had elapsed since the ship had begun to move, having occasion to ask the mate (he stood by my side) to take a compass bearing of the Pagoda, I caught myself reaching up to his ear in whispers. I say I caught myself, but enough had escaped to startle the man. I can't describe it otherwise than by saying that he shied. A grave, preoccupied manner, as though he were in possession of some perplexing intelligence, did not leave him henceforth. A little later I moved away from the rail to look at the compass with such a stealthy gait that the helmsman noticed it—and I could not help noticing the unusual roundness of his eyes. These are trifling instances, though it is to no commander's advantage to be suspected of ludicrous eccentricities. But I was also more seriously affected. There are to a seaman certain words, gestures, that should in given conditions come as naturally, as instinctively as the winking of a menaced eye. A certain order should spring on to his lips without thinking; a certain sign should get itself made, so to speak, without reflection. But all unconscious alertness had abandoned me. I had to make an effort of will to recall myself back (from the cabin) to the conditions of the moment. I felt that I was appearing an irresolute commander to those people who were watching me more or less critically.

And, besides, there were the scares. On the second day out, for instance, coming off the deck in the afternoon (I had straw slippers on my bare feet) I stopped at the open pantry door and spoke to the steward. He was doing something there with his back to me. At the sound of my voice he nearly jumped out of his skin, as the saying is, and incidentally broke a cup.

What on earth's the matter with you? I asked, astonished
He was extremely confused Beg pardon, sir I made sure you
were in your cabin "

You see I wasn't "

No, sir I could have sworn I had heard you moving in there
not a moment ago It's most extraordinary very sorry, sir

I passed on with an inward shudder I was so identified with
my secret double that I did not even mention the fact in those
scanty, fearful whispers we exchanged I suppose he had made
some slight noise of some kind or other It would have been
miraculous if he hadn't at one time or another And yet, hag-
gaid as he appeared, he looked always perfectly self-controlled
more than calm—almost invulnerable On my suggestion he re-
mained almost entirely in the bathroom, which, upon the whole,
was the safest place There could be really no shadow of an ex-
cuse for anyone ever wanting to go in there, once the steward
had done with it It was a very tiny place Sometimes he reclined
on the floor, his legs bent, his head sustained on one elbow At
others I would find him on the campstool, sitting in his gray
sleeping suit and with his cropped dark hair like a patient, un-
moved convict At night I would smuggle him into my bed
place, and we would whisper together, with the regular foot-
falls of the officer of the watch passing and repassing over our
heads It was an infinitely miserable time It was lucky that some
tins of fine preserves were stowed in a locker in my state-room,
hard bread I could always get hold of, and so he lived on stewed
chicken, *pate de foie gras* asparagus, cooked oysters, sardines—
on all sorts of abominable sham delicacies out of tins My early
morning coffee he always drank, and it was all I dared do for
him in that respect

Every day there was the horrible maneuvering to go through
so that my room and then the bathroom should be done in the
usual way I came to hate the sight of the steward, to abhor the
voice of that harmless man I felt that it was he who would bring
on the disaster of discovery It hung like a sword over our heads

The fourth day out, I think (we were then working down the
east side of the Gulf of Siam, tack for tack, in light winds and
smooth water)—the fourth day, I say, of this miserable juggling

with the unavoidable, as we sat at our evening meal, that man, whose slightest movement I dreaded, after putting down the dishes ran upon deck busily. This could not be dangerous. Presently he came down again, and then it appeared that he had remembered a coat of mine which I had thrown over a rail to dry after having been wetted in a shower which had passed over the ship in the afternoon. Sitting stolidly at the head of the table I became terrified at the sight of the garment on his arm. Of course he made for my door. There was no time to lose.

Steward, I thundered. My nerves were so shaken that I could not govern my voice and conceal my agitation. This was the sort of thing that made my terrifically whiskered mate tap his forehead with his forefinger. I had detected him using that gesture while talking on deck with a confidential air to the carpenter. It was too far to hear a word, but I had no doubt that this pantomime could only refer to the strange new captain.

Yes, sir, the pale faced steward turned resignedly to me. It was this maddening course of being shouted at, checked without rhyme or reason, arbitrarily chased out of my cabin, suddenly called into it, sent flying out of his pantry on incomprehensible errands, that accounted for the growing wretchedness of his expression.

Where are you going with that coat?

To your room, sir.

Is there another shower coming?

I'm sure I don't know, sir. Shall I go up again and see, sir?

No! never mind.

My object was attained, as of course my other self in there would have heard everything that passed. During this interlude my two officers never raised their eyes off their respective plates, but the lip of that confounded cub, the second mate, quivered visibly.

I expected the steward to hook my coat on and come out at once. He was very slow about it, but I dominated my nervousness sufficiently not to shout after him. Suddenly I became aware (it could be heard plainly enough) that the fellow for some reason or other was opening the door of the bathroom. It was the end. The place was literally not big enough to swing a cat in.

My voice died in my throat and I went stony all over I expected to hear a yell of surprise and terror, and made a movement, but had not the strength to get on my legs Everything remained still Had my second self taken the poor wretch by the throat? I don't know what I would have done next moment if I had not seen the steward come out of my room, close the door, and then stand quietly by the sideboard

Saved, I thought But, no! Lost! Gone! He was gone!

I laid my knife and fork down and leaned back in my chair My head swam After a while, when sufficiently recovered to speak in a steady voice, I instructed my mate to put the ship round at eight o'clock himself

I won't come on deck,' I went on I think I'll turn in, and unless the wind shifts I don't want to be disturbed before midnight I feel a bit seedy

You did look middling bad a little while ago, the chief mate remarked without showing any great concern

They both went out, and I stared at the steward clearing the table There was nothing to be read on that wretched man's face But why did he avoid my eyes I asked myself Then I thought I should like to hear the sound of his voice

Steward!

Sir! Startled as usual

Where did you hang up that coat?

In the bathroom, sir The usual anxious tone 'It's not quite dry yet, sir

For some time longer I sat in the cuddy Had my double vanished as he had come? But of his coming there was an explanation, whereas his disappearance would be inexplicable I went slowly into my dark room, shut the door, lighted the lamp, and for a time dared not turn round When at last I did I saw him standing bolt upright in the narrow recessed part It would not be true to say I had a shock, but an irresistible doubt of his bodily existence flitted through my mind Can it be, I asked myself, that he is not visible to other eyes than mine? It was like being haunted Motionless, with a grave face, he raised his hands slightly at me in a gesture which meant clearly, Heavens! what a narrow escape! Narrow indeed I think I had come creeping quietly as

near insanity as any man who has not actually gone over the border That gesture restrained me, so to speak

The mate with the terrific whiskers was now putting the ship on the other tack In the moment of profound silence which follows upon the hands going to their stations I heard on the poop his raised voice Hard alee! and the distant shout of the order repeated on the maindeck The sails, in that light breeze, made but a faint fluttering noise It ceased The ship was coming round slowly, I held my breath in the renewed stillness of expectation, one wouldn't have thought that there was a single living soul on her decks A sudden brisk shout, Mansail haul! broke the spell, and in the noisy cries and rush overhead of the men running away with the main brace we two, down in my cabin, came together in our usual position by the bed-place

He did not wait for my question I heard him fumbling here and just managed to squat myself down in the bath, he whispered to me The fellow only opened the door and put his arm in to hang the coat up All the same——

I never thought of that, I whispered back, even more appalled than before at the closeness of the shave, and marveling at that something unyielding in his character which was carrying him through so finely There was no agitation in his whisper Whoever was being driven distracted, it was not he He was sane And the proof of his sanity was continued when he took up the whispering again

It would never do for me to come to life again

It was something that a ghost might have said But what he was alluding to was his old captain's reluctant admission of the theory of suicide It would obviously serve his turn—if I had understood at all the view which seemed to govern the unalterable purpose of his action

You must maroon me as soon as ever you can get amongst these islands off the Cambodge shore, he went on

Maroon you! We are not living in a boy's adventure tale, I protested His scornful whispering took me up

We aren't indeed! There's nothing of a boy's tale in this But there's nothing else for it I want no more You don't suppose I am afraid of what can be done to me? Prison or gallows or what-

ever they may please But you don't see me coming back to explain such things to an old fellow in a wig and twelve respectable tradesmen, do you? What can they know whether I am guilty or not—or of *what* I am guilty, either? That's my affair What does the Bible say? Driven off the face of the earth Very well I am off the face of the earth now As I came at night so I shall go

Impossible! I murmured You can't

Can't? Not naked like a soul on the Day of Judgment I shall freeze on to this sleeping suit The Last Day is not yet—and you have understood thoroughly Didn't you?

I felt suddenly ashamed of myself I may say truly that I understood—and my hesitation in letting that man swim away from my ship's side had been a mere sham sentiment, a sort of cowardice

It can't be done now till next night, I breathed out The ship is on the offshore tack and the wind may fail us

As long as I know that you understand, he whispered "But of course you do It's a great satisfaction to have got somebody to understand You seem to have been there on purpose And in the same whisper, as if we two whenever we talked had to say things to each other which were not fit for the world to hear, he added, It's very wonderful

We remained side by side talking in our secret way—but sometimes silent or just exchanging a whispered word or two at long intervals And as usual he stared through the port A breath of wind came now and again into our faces The ship might have been moored in dock, so gently and on an even keel she slipped through the water, that did not murmur even at our passage, shadowy and silent like a phantom sea

At midnight I went on deck, and to my mate's great surprise put the ship round on the other tack His terrible whiskers flitted round me in silent criticism I certainly should not have done it if it had been only a question of getting out of that sleepy gulf as quickly as possible I believe he told the second mate who relieved him, that it was a great want of judgment The other only yawned That intolerable cub shuffled about so sleepily and lolled against the rails in such a slack, improper fashion that I came down on him sharply

Aren't you properly awake yet?

Yes, sir! I am awake

Well, then, be good enough to hold yourself as if you were
And keep a lookout If there's any current we'll be closing with
some islands before daylight

The east side of the gulf is fringed with islands, some solitary, others in groups On the blue background of the high coast they seem to float on silvery patches of calm water, arid and gray, or dark green and rounded like clumps of evergreen bushes, with the larger ones, a mile or two long, showing the outlines of ridges, ribs of gray rock under the dark mantle of matted leafage Un known to trade, to travel, almost to geography, the manner of life they harbor is an unsolved secret There must be villages—settlements of fishermen at least—on the largest of them, and some communication with the world is probably kept up by native craft But all that forenoon, as we headed for them, fanned along by the faintest of breezes, I saw no sign of man or canoe in the field of the telescope I kept on pointing at the scattered group

At noon I gave no orders for a change of course, and the mate's whiskers became much concerned and seemed to be offering themselves unduly to my notice At last I said

I am going to stand right in Quite in—as far as I can take her

The stare of extreme surprise imparted an air of ferocity also to his eyes, and he looked truly terrific for a moment

We're not doing well in the middle of the gulf, I continued, casually I am going to look for the land breezes tonight

Bless my soul! Do you mean, sir, in the dark amongst the lot of all them islands and reefs and shoals?

Well—if there are any regular land breezes at all on this coast one must get close inshore to find them, mustn't one?

Bless my soul! he exclaimed again under his breath All that afternoon he wore a dreamy, contemplative appearance which in him was a mark of perplexity After dinner I went into my stateroom as if I meant to take some rest There we two bent our dark heads over a half-unrolled chart lying on my bed

There, I said It's got to be Koh ring I've been looking at it

ever since sunrise It has got two hulls and a low point It must be inhabited And on the coast opposite there is what looks like the mouth of a bigish river—with some town, no doubt, not far up It's the best chance for you that I can see

Anything Koh-ring let it be

He looked thoughtfully at the chart as if surveying chances and distances from a lofty height—and following with his eyes his own figure wandering on the blank land of Cochín-China, and then passing off that piece of paper clean out of sight into uncharted regions And it was as if the ship had two captains to plan her course for her I had been so worried and restless running up and down that I had not had the patience to dress that day I had remained in my sleeping suit, with straw slippers and a soft floppy hat The closeness of the heat in the gulf had been most oppressive, and the crew were used to see me wandering in that airy attire

She will clear the south point as she heads now, I whispered into his ear Goodness only knows when, though, but certainly after dark I'll edge her in to half a mile, as far as I may be able to judge in the dark——

Be careful, he murmured, warningly—and I realized suddenly that all my future, the only future for which I was fit, would perhaps go irretrievably to pieces in any mishap to my first command

I could not stop a moment longer in the room I motioned him to get out of sight and made my way on the poop That unplayful cub had the watch I walked up and down for a while thinking things out, then beckoned him over

Send a couple of hands to open the two quarter deck ports, I said, mildly

He actually had the impudence, or else so forgot himself in his wonder at such an incomprehensible order, as to repeat

Open the quarter-deck ports! What for, sir?

The only reason you need concern yourself about is because I tell you to do so Have them open wide and fastened properly

He reddened and went off, but I believe made some jeering remark to the carpenter as to the sensible practice of ventilating a ship's quarter deck I know he popped into the mate's cabin

to impart the fact to him because the whiskers came on deck, as it were by chance, and stole glances at me from below—for signs of lunacy or drunkenness, I suppose

A little before supper, feeling more restless than ever, I rejoined, for a moment, my second self And to find him sitting so quietly was surprising, like something against nature, inhuman

I developed my plan in a hurried whisper

I shall stand in as close as I dare and then put her round I shall presently find means to smuggle you out of here into the sail locker, which communicates with the lobby But there is an opening, a sort of square for hauling the sails out, which gives straight on the quarter-deck and which is never closed in fine weather, so as to give air to the sails When the ship's way is deadened in stays and all the hands are aft at the main braces you shall have a clear road to slip out and get overboard through the open quarter-deck port I've had them both fastened up Use a rope's end to lower yourself into the water so as to avoid a splash—you know It could be heard and cause some beastly complication

He kept silent for a while, then whispered, I understand

I won't be there to see you go,' I began with an effort The rest I only hope I have understood, too'

You have From first to last, and for the first time there seemed to be a faltering, something strained in his whisper He caught hold of my arm, but the ringing of the supper bell made me start He didn't, though, he only released his grip

After supper I didn't come below again till well past eight o'clock The faint, steady breeze was loaded with dew, and the wet, darkened sails held all there was of propelling power in it The night, clear and starry, sparkled darkly, and the opaque, lightless patches shifting slowly against the low stars were the drifting islets On the port bow there was a big one more distant and shadowily imposing by the great space of sky it eclipsed

On opening the door I had a back view of my very own self looking at a chart He had come out of the recess and was standing near the table

Quite dark enough, I whispered

He stepped back and leaned against my bed with a level, quiet glance I sat on the couch We had nothing to say to each other

Over our heads the officer of the watch moved here and there. Then I heard him move quickly. I knew what that meant. He was making for the companion, and presently his voice was outside my door.

We are drawing in pretty fast, sir. Land looks rather close.

Very well, I answered. I am coming on deck directly.

I waited till he was gone out of the cuddy, then rose. My double moved too. The time had come to exchange our last whispers, for neither of us was ever to hear each other's natural voice.

Look here! I opened a drawer and took out three sovereigns.

Take this, anyhow. I've got six, and I'd give you the lot, only I must keep a little money to buy some fruit and vegetables for the crew from native boats as we go through Sunda Straits.

He shook his head.

Take it, I urged him, whispering desperately. No one can tell what—

He smiled and slapped meaningfully the only pocket of the sleeping jacket. It was not safe, certainly. But I produced a large old silk handkerchief of mine, and tying the three pieces of gold in a corner, pressed it on him. He was touched, I suppose, because he took it at last and tied it quickly round his waist under the jacket, on his bare skin.

Our eyes met, several seconds elapsed, till, our glances still mingled, I extended my hand and turned the lamp out. Then I passed through the cuddy, leaving the door of my room wide open. Steward!

He was still lingering in the pantry in the greatness of his zeal, giving a rub-up to a plated cruet stand the last thing before going to bed. Being careful not to wake up the mate, whose room was opposite, I spoke in an undertone.

He looked round anxiously. Sir!

Can you get me a little hot water from the galley?

I am afraid, sir, the galley fire's been out for some time now. Go and see.

He flew up the stairs.

Now, I whispered, loudly, into the saloon—too loudly, perhaps, but I was afraid I couldn't make a sound. He was by my

side in an instant—the double captain slipped past the stairs—through the tiny dark passage a sliding door We were in the sail locker, scrambling on our knees over the sails A sudden thought struck me I saw myself wandering barefooted, bare-headed, the sun beating on my dark poll I snatched off my floppy hat and tried hurriedly in the dark to ram it on my other self He dodged and fended off silently I wonder what he thought had come to me before he understood and suddenly desisted Our hands met gropingly, lingered united in a steady, motionless clasp for a second No word was breathed by either of us when they separated

I was standing quietly by the pantry door when the steward returned

Sorry, sir Kettle barely warm Shall I light the spirit lamp?

Never mind

I came out on deck slowly It was now a matter of conscience to shave the land as close as possible—for now he must go overboard whenever the ship was put in stays Must! There could be no going back for him After a moment I walked over to leeward and my heart flew into my mouth at the nearness of the land on the bow Under any other circumstances I would not have held on a minute longer The second mate had followed me anxiously

I looked on till I felt I could command my voice

‘She will weather, I said then in a quiet tone

‘Are you going to try that, sir?’ he stammered out incredulously

I took no notice of him and raised my tone just enough to be heard by the helmsman

‘Keep her good full

‘Good full, sir

The wind fanned my cheek, the sails slept, the world was silent The strain of watching the dark loom of the land grow bigger and denser was too much for me I had shut my eyes—because the ship must go closer She must! The stillness was intolerable Were we standing still?

When I opened my eyes the second view started my heart with a thump The black southern hill of Koh ring seemed to hang

right over the ship like a towering fragment of the everlasting night On that enormous mass of blackness there was not a gleam to be seen, not a sound to be heard It was gliding irresistibly toward us and yet seemed already within reach of the hand I saw the vague figures of the watch grouped in the waist, gazing in awed silence

Are you going on, sir? inquired an unsteady voice at my elbow

I ignored it I had to go on

Keep her full Don't check her way That won't do now,' I said warningly

I can't see the sails very well, the helmsman answered me, in strange, quavering tones

Was she close enough? Already she was, I won't say in the shadow of the land, but in the very blackness of it, already swallowed up as it were, gone too close to be recalled, gone from me altogether

Give the mate a call, I said to the young man who stood at my elbow as still as death And turn all hands up

My tone had a borrowed loudness reverberated from the height of the land Several voices cried out together We are all on deck, sir

Then stillness again, with the great shadow gliding closer, towering higher, without a light, without a sound Such a hush had fallen on the ship that she might have been a bark of the dead floating in slowly under the very gate of Erebus

My God! Where are we?

It was the mate moaning at my elbow He was thunderstruck, and as it were deprived of the moral support of his whiskers He clapped his hands and absolutely cried out, Lost!

Be quiet, I said sternly

He lowered his tone, but I saw the shadowy gesture of his despair What are we doing here?

Looking for the land wind

He made as if to tear his hair, and addressed me recklessly

She will never get out You have done it, sir I knew it'd end in something like this She will never weather, and you are too close now to stay She'll drift ashore before she's round O my God!

I caught his arm as he was raising it to batter his poor devoted head, and shook it violently

She's ashore already, he wailed, trying to tear himself away
"Is she? Keep good full there!"

Good full, sir, 'cried the helmsman in a frightened, thin, child-like voice

I hadn't let go the mate's arm and went on shaking it Ready about, do you hear? You go forward—shake—and stop there—shake—"and hold your nose—shake—and see these head sheets properly overhauled—shake, shake—shake

And all the time I dared not look toward the land lest my heart should fail me I released my grip at last and he ran forward as if fleeing for dear life

I wondered what my double there in the sail locker thought of this commotion He was able to hear everything—and perhaps he was able to understand why, on my conscience, it had to be thus close—no less My first order Hard alee! re-echoed ominously under the towering shadow of Koh-ring as if I had shouted in a mountain gorge And then I watched the land intently In that smooth water and light wind it was impossible to feel the ship coming-to No! I could not feel her And my second self was making now ready to slip out and lower himself overboard Perhaps he was gone already ?

The great black mass brooding over our very mastheads began to pivot away from the ship's side silently And now I forgot the secret stranger ready to depart, and remembered only that I was a total stranger to the ship I did not know her Would she do it? How was she to be handled?

I swung the mainyard and waited helplessly She was perhaps stopped, and her very fate hung in the balance, with the black mass of Koh-ring like the gate of the everlasting night towering over her taffrail What would she do now? Had she way on her yet? I stepped to the side swiftly, and on the shadowy water I could see nothing except a faint phosphorescent flash revealing the glassy smoothness of the sleeping surface It was impossible to tell—and I had not learned yet the feel of my ship Was she moving? What I needed was something easily seen, a piece of paper, which I could throw overboard and watch I had nothing

on me To run down for it I didn't dare There was no time All at once my strained, yearning stare distinguished a white object floating within a yard of the ship's side White on the black water A phosphorescent flash passed under it What was that thing? I recognized my own floppy hat It must have fallen off his head and he didn't bother Now I had what I wanted—the saving mark for my eyes But I hardly thought of my other self, now gone from the ship, to be hidden forever from all friendly faces, to be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, with no brand of the curse on his sane forehead to stay a slaying hand too proud to explain

And I watched the hat—the expression of my sudden pity for his mere flesh It had been meant to save his homeless head from the dangers of the sun And now—behold—it was saving the ship, by serving me for a mark to help out the ignorance of my strangeness Ha! It was drifting forward, warning me just in time that the ship had gathered sternway

Shift the helm, I said in a low voice to the seaman standing still like a statue

The man's eyes glistened wildly in the binnacle light as he jumped round to the other side and spun round the wheel

I walked to the break of the poop On the overshadowed deck all hands stood by the forebraces waiting for my order The stars ahead seemed to be gliding from right to left And all was so still in the world that I heard the quiet remark She's round, passed in a tone of intense relief between two seamen

Let go and haul

The foreyards ran round with a great noise, amidst cheery cries And now the frightful whisks made themselves heard giving various orders Already the ship was drawing ahead And I was alone with her Nothing! no one in the world should stand now between us, throwing a shadow on the way of silent knowledge and mute affection, the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command

Walking to the taffrail, I was in time to make out, on the very edge of a darkness thrown by a towering black mass like the very gateway of Erebus—yes, I was in time to catch an evanescent glimpse of my white hat left behind to mark the spot where the

secret sharer of my cabin and of my thoughts, as though he were my second self, had lowered himself into the water to take his punishment a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny

1910

BASIL LUBBOCK



A Hell-Ship Voyage

We now come to the second period in the life of the *Cutty Sark*

In the spring of 1880 orders for the best Welsh steam coal to supply their fleet in Japanese waters were sent over to England by the American Navy Department

The coal was wanted as soon as possible and big freights were offered in order to attract clipper ships, which would race out with it to Japan

Uncertain as to what he would do with his cut down tea clipper, John Willis jumped gladly at the American offer, and thus we find the *Cutty Sark* leaving London in ballast on 6th May, 1880, bound to Wales in order to load steam coal for the American fleet in the Pacific

Besides a new outfit of sails, spars and rigging, the *Cutty Sark* left London with a new set of apprentices, hastily collected from Willis's other ships, which happened to be at home

Of these apprentices McCausland joined from the *Zenobia*, Sankey and Bill Barton from the *Fantasie*—better known as the old Steele built clipper *Eliza Shaw*—Fullerton from the *White adder*, and Stanton from Green's *Carlsle Castle*, whilst Parton and Kirby were first voyagers. With regard to the rest of the ship's company, jovial Captain Wallace remained in command

The mate, though a Scotsman, was a regular bucko of Down East style—one of those hard fibred, despotic characters which were more common in the virile days of sail than in these luxurious days of steam

The second mate was a rather colourless young Englishman, who was so short sighted that Captain Wallace nearly always

stood his watch with him. The third mate was an apprentice out of his time, who had failed to pass as second mate and had signed on as O S. He lived in the half-deck.

The carpenter was one of those seamen, who, having fallen in love with a ship, look upon her in the light of a sweetheart and sign in her regularly voyage after voyage.

Chips had been in the *Cutty Sark* since her launch. He knew every timber and bolt in her and was a very privileged person, a favourite of old White Hat, a trusted adviser of Captain Wallace, and an oracle in the *Cutty's* half deck.

The sailmaker was a big German, of that well-known type called 'squareheads,' who one and all answer to the name of Dutchy.

Of the crew with which she left London we need say little. The short experience of Mr Bucko Smith in the trip round to Wales was sufficient to send them and their bags flying over the rail. Directly the *Cutty Sark* reached the coal port of Penarth, where she arrived on 22nd May.

Captain Wallace found the usual difficulty in picking a crew at a Welsh coal port, his task not being rendered any easier by the sinister reputation of his mate. Finally he had to content himself with a very scratch lot of nationalities, consisting of 5 Englishmen, 3 Danes, 3 niggers (two of them steamboat men), 2 Greeks and an Italian.

With cook and steward the *Cutty Sark* thus had her complement of 28 souls, one of the Englishmen serving as bosun.

Wallace sailed from Penarth on 4th June—a Friday, and at once a member of the crew began to prophesy the well known consequences. This man was something of a character, a veritable sea croaker, a cross grained, sour tempered seaman of a type which used to flourish in sailing ship foc'sles. His conversation ran entirely in the minor key: he was a pessimist of pessimists; his yarns were all concerned with mutiny and murder, with shipwrecks and disasters, with foul weather and fearful diseases, whilst he was superstitious to the last degree.

The man seemed to nurse a thousand wrongs within his hairy breast, to see death and destruction ever within an arm's length and to expect nothing less than hell and damnation for everyone within his ken. He was one of those hard bitten sailors who re-

quired next to no sleep, and during his night watches below he would pace the deck muttering to himself for hour after hour. Naturally enough he was a prime seaman, there was no fear in his composition, he had brooded so upon horrors that nothing could daunt him, and no Liverpool packet-rat was ever tougher or more enduring.

The apprentices of the *Cutty Sark* were not long in finding a suitable nickname for this queer old man of the sea, whose prophecies of evil were soon to be so amply fulfilled. There was something so uncanny about him that the boys likened him to the Flying Dutchman, and he was soon known aboard as Vanderdecken.

The first of his prophecies was almost instantly confirmed. The *Cutty Sark* was barely to sea on that fatal Friday before she was compelled to anchor in the Severn, whilst a wild sou-west gale shrieked up the Bristol Channel for three days of flying scud, raging seas and howling winds, which tested her ground tackle to the utmost.

The gale over, the pilot was dropped and departure taken from Lundy Island on 7th June. To the secret disgust of Vanderdecken, the *Cutty Sark* carried a strong fair wind to Cape Finisterre, then good N.E. trades gave her the course to the line. In the strength of the trades *Cutty Sark* fell in with *Titania*, which had left London on 3rd June.

Both ships were bound to Anjer for orders. For the next four days, the two famous tea clippers with every rag set raced side by side. It was *Titania's* best point of sailing and the two ships proved to be so evenly matched that there was little to choose between them. *Titania* had been stripped of her racing sails and spars as far back as 1872, as much as 10 feet being cut off her lower masts, yet this did not affect her speed in strong winds any more than it did that of the *Cutty Sark*.

It would have been hard to find two more perfect ships of their size and type, and we may well imagine the wonderful picture they must have made as they raced south, neck and neck, in that lovely trade weather. A morning came, however, when their courses differed and they gradually parted company, with the understanding that it was to be a race to Anjer.

Soon after this the *Cutty Sark* raised the Peak of Teneriffe, standing up like a black cone upon the horizon. This was the well known mirage, for the Peak was over 150 miles away, and as the sun rose higher in the heavens the cone gradually disappeared.

The *Cutty Sark* made a splendid run to the line, but the usual work of shifting sail, as soon as the doldrums were reached, gave her bucko mate a splendid chance of working up his watch in proper hellion fashion.

His spite was chiefly vented upon the three darkies, especially one of them named John Francis, who was particularly incapable and clumsy. In shifting the mainsail this man managed to get his hand badly crushed in a buntline block. The pain roused his temper and he began to talk back at the mate, who was swearing at him from the deck with all the sting and concentrated venom in his composition.

Then the mate's watch began to show their sympathy for the nigger and very shortly the whole ship was in an uproar. By the time that the hands came down from bending the mainsail, matters had grown to such a pitch that Captain Wallace called his officers and apprentices aft and gave them arms. He then turned to the angry foremast crowd and boldly declaring that he meant to put a stop to the trouble once and for all, ordered Francis to apologise to the mate or else take a hiding from him.

The nigger, who saw red where the mate was concerned, flung off his coat in defiance. A ring was at once formed just forward of the poop. The nigger and the mate flung themselves upon each other with all the fury and lack of rules usual in sea fights, whilst the captain flourished his revolver and threatened to shoot the first man who attempted to interfere.

The two belligerents pounded away at each other for about a quarter of an hour without much result, then Captain Wallace stopped the fight and sent the hands forward with the caution that he would put the next man in irons whom he caught abusing his officers.

This method of preserving discipline at least cleared the air, Captain Wallace had acted with decision, moreover he was very popular with all hands and henceforth, though the bucko mate

was far from mending his ways and still vented his spite on the niggers both watches worked keenly to make a record trip

With the old man driving the ship and his bucko mate driving her crew, the *Cutty Sark* made a splendid run to the Cape meridian

The first of really heavy easting weather occurred in $42^{\circ} 30' S$, $23^{\circ} 00' E$ when the wind began to come out of the sou west in heavier and heavier squalls then it gradually settled down to a blow of hurricane force, straight from the west This was just the weather to bring out the daring and resourcefulness of Captain Wallace and show the *Cutty Sark* at her best

The old man hung grimly on to his canvas until a particularly vicious squall tore his brand new fore and main topgallant sails from the bolt rope, at the same moment the lower fore topsail sheet carried away and that sail went to tatters

By this time a tremendous sea was running whose long hill-like ridges rolled up astern until it seemed that the *Cutty* must be pooped and swept out of existence But in such a case the *Cutty Sark* was always game and running beautifully, lifting clear of each sea with a buoyancy which roused the enthusiasm of her crew

Whilst she was in the trough her topsails fell into the mast, absolutely becalmed by the hissing crests of the great combers, then as she rose, the sails filled with a clap of thunder which shook the ship from stern to stem and threatened to tear the masts out of her

The gale was about at its worse when the men were sent aloft to bend a new lower fore topsail, which was swayed aloft to the tune of Blow! Boys! Blow!

*Oh blow my boys I long to hear you
Blow boys blow!
Oh sing my boys, twill always cheer you
Blow my bully boys blow!
With a gallant ship and a bully crew
Blow boys blow!
Were just the boys to pull her through
Blow, my bully boys blow!*

*Oh blow my boys, no cause for growling,
Blow boys blow!
Though up aloft the wind is howling
Blow my bully boys blow!
Oh blow my boys, no finer weather
Blow, boys blow!
A long strong pull, and all together
Blow my bully boys, blow!
Then blow to day, and all to-morrow
Blow, boys blow!
With cheery hearts no thought of sorrow
Blow my bully boys, blow!
For up aloft this sail must go,
Blow boys blow!
What if the wind blow high or low
Blow, my bully boys blow!*

There is nothing like a chanty to put heart into men in bad weather, and up went the topsail in its stops, all ready for bending—but it was another matter to bend it

For two hours the hands aloft fought to bend that sail between gasps for breath, which was torn from their lungs by the storm fiend, they swore at the wind, they swore at each other in that mental irritation which is common at such moments

Finger nails were torn in their efforts to hold on to the bagging canvas. The sweat ran off their cheeks into the necks of their oilskins. The footrope swung and dipped as they braced themselves against the tilting yard, and strove to pass the rovings under the jackstay. The task seemed an impossibility, but that topsail had to be set in order to keep the *Cutty Sark* ahead of those monstrous chasing seas, and set it eventually was.

Whilst the battle raged aloft, one green sea did succeed in coming in over the stern and swept the length of the deck so that to the men on the yard there was nought to be seen but three masts sticking out of a maelstrom of boiling foam. Then, with deck ports clanging, the gallant little ship cleared herself and rushed headlong into the yawning hollow. Hardly was the topsail sheeted home before the gale settled down into a steady blow.

On the morning of the second day three test heaves of the log

were taken, when the *Cutty Sark* seemed to be doing her best, and $17\frac{1}{2}$, 17 and $17\frac{1}{2}$ knots were recorded, whilst 16 knots were constantly on the log slate

As usual the little clipper steered beautifully Under foresail and fore lower topsail, the two main topsails and sometimes a main topgallant sail, the mizen lower topsail and two headsails (for safety in case of a broach to), she almost steered herself, yet it looked alarming enough to the man going aft to relieve the wheel But in spite of the overtaking seas bumping under her stern as she rose on top of them, the *Cutty Sark* neither kicked nor yawned but piked along dead before it

And during the whole of this strenuous time her mixed crew played up most gallantly, their only wish being to give the ship her chance and break the record

At the first sign of a lull there came a call to stick out all three topgallant sails and out tumbled the watch below, gallantly in different to risk of life and limb or to the loss of their hard earned sleep

Wallace, the sail carrier, had hung on to his topgallant sails to the last moment and he set them again at the very first opportunity, indeed no sooner had the storm spent its intensity than he sheeted home his royals

The strongest part of the blow lasted for three days, and in those short days of easting the *Cutty Sark* ran 1050 miles—an average of 350 miles a day or $14\frac{1}{2}$ knots for 72 hours

Captain Wallace was one of those skippers who took an interest in their apprentices On Sundays it was his custom to ask a couple of them to dinner, and we may guess how the boys appreciated the treat

Most captains believed in the hardening process which they themselves had had to undergo in their youth

An apprentice in the *Lothair* under the stern Captain Orchard recounts that the only time his captain spoke to him during the whole voyage was to rebuke him for dropping ropeyarns on the sacred poop when he was serving the eyes of the ratlines in the mizen rigging

Unfortunately for the boy, the captain had hardly finished speaking when down came another ropeyarn, which landed at the autocrat's feet, whereupon Orchard burst out with — Damn you, if you drop another ropeyarn on the poop I'll send you out of this altogether. After this threat we may be certain that the apprentice made sure of his ends going over the rail and not inboard.

Two of Wallace's apprentices used to take sights regularly, and the captain was at pains to help them with their navigation.

The subject of navigation, indeed, suddenly assumed unusual importance, for, as the *Cutty Sark* neared the longitude of St Paul's Island the chronometers began to differ by five minutes in their rate, and Captain Wallace had no means of knowing which of the two was right. No ship was sighted. Tristan d'Acunha had been kept below the horizon and St Paul's Island was given a wide berth.

The *Cutty Sark* continued to make good time, and it was soon necessary to haul up for Sunda Straits. The shift of helm caused the chief tragedy of this tragic voyage. It was the middle watch. The *Cutty Sark* was on the starboard tack, with a nice wholesale breeze from the south east. The mate's watch was on deck, the troublesome nigger, John Francis, being on the look out. At 3 a.m. Captain Wallace gave the orders to alter course from east to N.N.E. This meant squaring her in. Whilst the watch manned the foresheet, the mate sang out to the nigger on the foc'sle head to let go the tack. But the order was not obeyed. Again the mate sang out. And again the look out took not the least notice. This was more than the bucko could stand, and he went forward on the jump, his mouth full of strong language and his heart full of rage.

Apparently the darkey met him with not only an insolent tongue but a raised capstan bar. There was a short sharp struggle, whilst the mate gained possession of the bar. Then it was the rafter's turn, and without a moment's hesitation he brought it down on the man's head with such force that John Francis dropped senseless to the deck. It must have been a shrewd blow, for a black man's skull is notoriously hard, yet Francis never regained consciousness and died on the third day after the blow had been struck.

He was buried at sea, the captain reading the service Though the nigger was far from being popular amongst his shipmates, the mate was still less popular The ship suddenly became very silent With gloomy faces and angry, bitter hearts the foremast crowd went about their work in sullen silence, whilst the after guard, sensing the atmosphere forward, were uneasy and full of foreboding

The mate retired to his cabin and was not seen again on deck for the rest of the passage, Captain Wallace taking his watch

The *Cutty Sark* was now barely a week from Anjer, but, owing to the error in his chronometers, Captain Wallace dared not lay a direct course for Java Head, but, allowing a margin of about 80 mile, did not haul in for the land until he was in the latitude of the Straits

A nice fresh sea breeze took the *Cutty Sark* in under the shadow of Krakatoa and then died away And whilst she lay becalmed to leeward, her crew had the mortification of seeing their rival, the *Titania*, glide up the Straits before a nice little air of wind Thus, through the error in her chronometers, the *Cutty Sark* went about a hundred miles out of her way and lost the race with *Titania* by 12 hours, both ships anchoring off Anjer on the same day

The *Cutty Sark* had made a very good run out, being only 72 days from Penarth to Anjer, and 69 days from her departure from Lundy Island

Whilst *Titania* continued her passage to Hongkong, where she arrived on 16th September, *Cutty Sark* had to wait for orders, for old Willis had not expected a run of this speed from his cut down clipper, and Captain Wallace, though he thought that his destination would be Yokohama, found that there was no telegram awaiting him at Anjer confirming this

This telegram did not arrive until 29th August

Whilst the *Cutty Sark* lay off Anjer awaiting her belated orders, the mate took the opportunity of persuading his kind-hearted captain to help him to escape

An American ship, the *Colorado*, had just arrived from Hamburg and lay at anchor ahead of the *Cutty Sark* Captain Wallace found that the old man of the *Colorado* was quite ready to take

'Cutty's bucko mate aboard, being only too glad to get hold of a manhandler of such reputation

The next question was how to smuggle the mate aboard the *Colorado* without the knowledge of the Cutty's crowd, for it was known aft that the friends of the murdered nigger, headed by old Vanderdecken, had sworn that they would see the mate brought to book

They were hoodwinked in this fashion. Early one morning some native bumboats came alongside to starboard, whereupon the old man supplied the hands with some money, and both watches were soon busy bargaining over the side for packets of jagger and bunches of small onions, for bananas and pineapples, for Java sparrows and screaming parrakeets

Whilst this hullabaloo was going on, the mate, unnoticed by the excited men waging their brisk bargains with the gesticulating and screeching Malays, sneaked up on deck and quietly dropped into a sampan, or it may have been the *Colorado's* boat, which had cautiously dropped under the Cutty's port quarter. This escape of the *Cutty Sark's* mate has been a well-known yarn in ships' foc'sles for many years. Gradually it has been embroidered and enlarged upon until at last the celebrated Joseph Conrad was tempted to put it into one of his books.

But the version which stated that the mate swam off to the *Colorado* was an absurd one, for the Straits are infested with sharks and he would have had to swim against wind and current. The mate made the trip to the Down Easter in a boat. But he had hardly got safely away from the *Cutty Sark* and hidden aboard the *Colorado* before his escape was discovered.

It turned out that one of the men had noticed him with a bundle in his hand, skulking about behind the deckhouse at 7.30 a.m., just after the bumboats had come alongside, and the foc'sle was not long in putting two and two together. Led by old Vanderdecken, they at once refused to work, declaring that they would not turn to until the mate was found. In spite of his popularity, Captain Wallace was unable to pacify them, and he at last agreed to take some of the men ashore to see the authorities.

Men before the mast had small chance of getting fairplay ashore

in those days The native police were certainly ordered to search all the ships lying off Anjer for the missing mate, but the crew of the *Cutty Sark* were not allowed to join in the search There was a good deal of fuss, with, of course, no result

The crew of the now notorious clipper were by no means satisfied with the steps taken by the authorities ashore—they knew they had been hoodwinked and so they still refused to turn to

The *Cutty Sark* had now been at Anjer a week, and at the psychological moment the belated orders arrived—she was to proceed to Yokohama

It was now time to get underweigh, but not a member of the focs le would touch a capstan bar Whereupon Wallace determined to up anchor and set sail as best he could with the aid of his devoted apprentices and petty officers, so the capstan was manned by the half-deck, carpenter, cook, steward and sailmaker

The more determined of the crew immediately tried to interfere, but again Wallace acted with decision—the afterguard were given arms and the ringleaders of the crew, four in all, were captured and clapped in irons At which the remainder of the crew retired sulkily to the focs le, whilst six boys and four men set to work on the long weary job of weighing the anchor in that steamy, enervating heat

The anchor was barely off the ground before a light draught of air gave the *Cutty* steerage way and carried her out of Anjer Roads into the Java Sea It was the 5th September Scarcely, however, was the *Cutty Sark* clear of the land before she ran into a clock calm which lasted on and off for three days The ship now rang with old Vanderdecken's prophecies of disaster He described the evils which would happen to the poor little *Cutty Sark* and all on board with such a wealth of detailed horror that some of the hands became really frightened The whole ship's company felt tragedy in the air and it was not long in coming

Captain Wallace had no sooner helped his mate to escape than he realised in what a predicament he had placed himself He saw an official investigation looming ahead at Yokohama, in which there was little doubt that he would be held responsible for the mate's escape, and the very least that he could expect was the

suspension of his certificate. He had an old mother and a young wife dependent upon him, and the future for them as well as for himself looked black indeed.

The worry of it all so preyed upon the once jovial skipper that all hands began to pity his care worn face. Ever since the escape of the mate he had been unable to sleep. Night and day he stood gazing out to sea or walked with bowed head up and down the poop in a misery which was plain to see.

His friends in the half deck watched him furtively with anxious eyes. There was no more singing in the dog watches—only the ceaseless drone of that croaker, Vanderdecken, mingled with the lazy flapping of the listless, calm ridden sails. The ship had lost all life. The calm aggravated the tension aboard. The sullen crew, still athirst for vengeance upon the missing mate, kept forward and allowed the half deck to do what work was necessary. Discipline had grown lax under the influence of the captain's indifference to all around him, the steamy heat and the stagnant calm.

It was not a situation that could possibly last, something had to happen soon. One or two of the wisest recognised that the captain's mind and body could not stand the strain much longer. The reliable Chips stood watch with his skipper, ready to stand by his beloved ship and her unfortunate captain, but uncertain how to act in order to relieve the strain.

The scene was laid and the climax was at hand.

On the fourth day after leaving Anjer, the watch had just been called at 4 a.m., when the captain, who was standing at the break of the poop with the carpenter, turned to his faithful petty officer and asked if the second mate was on deck.

Chips replied that he was just coming up. Whereupon Captain Wallace left the carpenter and walked aft, called the helmsman's attention to the course, then deliberately stepped on to the taffrail and jumped overboard.

At the moment the *Cutty Sark* was sneaking along at about two knots before a faint draught of air. The man at the wheel quickly threw over the two life buoys and put the helm down. The crew, who had for so long refused to work, flung themselves upon a

boat, which had been used at Anjer and was still in the davits, and had it in the water in record time

The sea was as calm as a mill pond. The life-buoys were picked up, but no trace of the captain was ever found, though a number of sharks swimming furiously about gave only too clear an indication of his fate.

Thus passed a splendid seaman, a kind and capable shipmaster, and a man whose death was regretted by everyone aboard. The crew took the death of their captain greatly to heart and blamed themselves bitterly for refusing duty. The half deck lamented the loss of a true friend, whilst the *Cutty Sark* had been deprived of a skipper who understood her every mood and had proved that he knew how to get every ounce of speed out of her. Tragedies and misfortunes have a way of piling up. The *Cutty Sark* had sailed on a Friday, and old Vanderdecken's evil prophecies were fast beginning to mature, her run of bad luck had now fairly started, and from henceforth there was to be no let up until the voyage was ended.

As soon as the boat was hoisted up and all hope of saving the captain abandoned, a consultation of all hands was held. The crew wanted the second mate to take the ship on to Yokohama, but that young man was quite unfit for such a responsibility, his navigation was very shaky, and his eyesight was so bad that he was compelled to ask Sankey, the star navigator amongst the apprentices, to help him in taking sights. There was evidently nothing for it but to head back for Anjer, and in that calm weather it took the *Cutty Sark* four days to regain the anchorage.

Nor were these four days without accident. When close to the Cap and Button Rocks and without a breath of wind, the *Cutty Sark* was caught in a strong tide-race, which swept her stern first round the northwest side of Thwarttheway Island.

The steep rocky sides of that well known island rise sheer up from a great depth, and so close to the shore was the *Cutty Sark* taken by the current that her yards had to be braced up to avoid striking the towering cliffs. Luckily there were no out-lying reefs and the deep sea lead gave no bottom, but it was sufficiently alarming to make old Vanderdecken declare that the ship was

bewitched However, the island, so well named Thwarttheway, was cleared without mishap A light breeze then sprang up and allowed the *Cutty Sark* to head in for the anchorage

The inexperienced second mate next proceeded to anchor too far out and dropped his hook upon a shelving rock which terminated abruptly in deep water The next day he was compelled to move the ship on to better holding ground nearer the land

The *Cutty Sark* now had another week of idleness, whilst cables passed to and fro between the incapable second mate and the mystified John Willis, who had, of course, heard nothing of the killing of the nigger and the escape of the mate

Whilst the second mate spent his days between the ship and the telegraph station, little work beyond wetting down the decks was done on board, but the lucky apprentices who manned the boat enjoyed many a stroll through the small native town and Dutch colony, which was so shortly afterwards to be wiped out by the appalling eruption of the extinct volcano of Krakatoa At first Willis, who was loath to forfeit such a good charter, wanted the second mate to proceed to Yokohama, but the man, if without grit, knew his own limitations and refused to undertake the responsibility At last orders came out for the *Cutty Sark* to proceed to Singapore in charge of a Dutch pilot

The next excitement was the working of the *Cutty Sark* through the narrow Banka Strait The ship was put under Calashee watch, which meant that all hands stood by ready for a call to work ship, but no other work was done The straits are narrow, not much wider than a large river in places, and what with tides and currents, rocks and shoals, calms and squalls and sudden shifts of wind, the ship had to be handled smartly Nor did the bewitched clipper get through without one close call With no wind and helpless in the grip of a strong current, the *Cutty Sark* drifted by some sunken rocks on which the surf was boiling

For a few moments the hearts of all on board stood still, then, with her usual luck in extricating herself from almost certain disaster, the *Cutty* slid by the reef, just clear of the broken water but so close to the jagged fangs which showed above the surf that the meanest thrower aboard could have tossed a biscuit on to them

But for this scare the passage was a most enjoyable one. For the most part a gentle fair wind prevailed, which made it ideal sailing. Nor was the weather too warm, and amply clad in broad brimmed hats, rolled up dungaree pants and open throated shirts, the ship's company lounged about the decks as if on a yachting cruise. With the double tragedy but just beneath the horizon, the crew nevertheless were able to enjoy the trip with the usual sailor's shortness of memory for the unpleasant. A week of this idyllic sailing brought the *Cutty Sark* into Singapore harbour, and on 18th September she once more dropped her anchor.

FRANK O'CONNOR



Repentance

He knew he should have been overjoyed, but he wasn't. Preparation for his first confession and first Holy Communion involved the importation into the school of a horrid old devil of a woman in a big black bonnet and black beaded cloak who kept them in for an extra half-hour during the whole week. While she talked Micky's attention wandered from her beard, which was large, to her rings, which were many. She was supposed to be enormously rich, and somehow the story had gone the rounds that she would give them sweets. She gave them no sweets at all, and when on her first visit she opened her large handbag it was only to produce a candle and a box of matches. She staggered from her seat to the mantelpiece, wagging her big rheumatically buttocks, and lit the candle. Then with fat, yellow, half dead fingers that shone with rings she opened her purse and took out a crown piece. A thrill of expectation ran through the roomful of ragged little boys, Micky's heart leaped wildly, and in the silence that followed, the silly song of a blackbird rose and fell from the green boughs that tapped the high square school window.

I will give five shillings, she said in a solemn voice, five shillings in silver I will now give to any little boy who will hold one finger, only one finger, in that candle flame for five minutes.

They looked from her to the crown piece and from that to the candle, chagrin and disappointment seizing all their hearts.

One shilling for every minute, she said, head lowered, bonnet wagging. Oh, my, isn't that high wages? What? No little boy wants to earn five shillings?

No one answered. Micky thought it was more than his mother earned for a week's work.

FRANK O'CONNOR



*First Confession**

All the trouble began when my grandfather died and my grandmother—my father's mother—came to live with us. Relations in the one house are a strain at the best of times, but, to make matters worse, my grandmother was a real old countrywoman and quite unsuited to the life in town. She had a fat, wrinkled old face, and, to Mother's great indignation, went round the house in bare feet—the boots had her crippled, she said. For dinner she had a jug of porter and a pot of potatoes with—sometimes—a bit of salt fish, and she poued out the potatoes on the table and ate them slowly, with great relish, using her fingers by way of a fork.

Now, girls are supposed to be fastidious, but I was the one who suffered most from this. Noia, my sister, just sucked up to the old woman for the penny she got every Friday out of the old age pension, a thing I could not do. I was too honest, that was my trouble, and when I was playing with Bill Connell, the sergeant major's son, and saw my grandmother steering up the path with the jug of porter sticking out from beneath her shawl I was mortified. I made excuses not to let him come into the house, because I could never be sure what she would be up to when we went in.

When Mother was at work and my grandmother made the dinner I wouldn't touch it. Nora once tried to make me, but I hid under the table from her and took the bread knife with me for protection. Noia let on to be very indignant (she wasn't, of course, but she knew Mother saw through her, so she sided with Gran).

* This story and *Repentance* (on left hand pages 278–296) are two versions of the same tale. *First Confession* is the later version.

'For the last time, she said, her tone growing more solemn
Still no one replied

And yet, she went on, her voice rising shrilly, by offending against Almighty God you run the risk of burning not your finger but your whole body and soul, not for five nor ten nor twenty minutes, but for all eternity, for ever and ever For ever—do you understand the meaning of that?

Yes, ma'am they chorused

You don't like school, do you?

No, ma'am, replied a few of the bolder spirits

And you're all wishing it was half past three so that you could go home and have your dinners and play?

Yes, ma'am, they agreed with a little more unanimity, all but one sponger who chimed in with No, ma'am, we like listening to you

Hell, she intoned, is a school from which you will never get out Never! Three o'clock will come, half past three, four, but no devil will ever say School is over She chuckled grimly, and, leaning with one hand on the back of her chair, she poked her index finger at one after another of them And it won't be any use holding up your hands then and saying, Please may I go home now?

In the gloomy silence that followed while she pulled up her skirts and resumed her seat, nodding her black bonnet menacingly, Micky, listening to the blackbird's silly piping, wished that the good God had permitted him to be born a blackbird, so that he could perch on a bough and look in the school window and whistle denisively at the poor dejected urchins within, trying to cope with the twin horrors of sums and hell

As if that wasn't enough there was the sight of his grand mother to upset him when he came home to dinner His grand mother, his father's mother, had come to live with them and he hated her He hated her wrinkled face and untidy grey hair, he hated her snuff taking and the bare dirty feet on which she plodded about the kitchen, he hated the great meal of potatoes she cooked for herself morning and evening, the way she spread a potful on the table, peeled them with her fingers, dipped them

and came after me I lashed out at her with the bread knife, and after that she left me alone I stayed there till Mother came in from work and made my dinner, but when Father came in later Nora said in a shocked voice Oh, Dadda, do you know what Jackie did at dinnertime? Then, of course, it all came out, Father gave me a flaking, Mother interferred, and for days after that he didn't speak to me and Mother barely spoke to Nora And all because of that old woman! God knows, I was heart scalded

Then, to crown my misfortunes, I had to make my first confession and communion It was an old woman called Ryan who prepared us for these She was about the one age with Gran, she was well to do, lived in a big house on Montenotte, wore a black cloak and bonnet, and came every day to school at three o'clock when we should have been going home, and talked to us of hell She may have mentioned the other place as well, but that could only have been by accident, for hell had the first place in her heart

She lit a candle, took out a new half crown, and offered it to the first boy who would hold one finger—only one finger!—in the flame for five minutes by the school clock Being always very ambitious I was tempted to volunteer, but I thought it might look greedy Then she asked were we afraid of holding one finger—only one finger!—in a little candle flame for five minutes and not afraid of burning all over in roasting hot furnaces for all eternity

All eternity! Just think of that! A whole lifetime goes by and it's nothing not even a drop in the ocean of your sufferings The woman was really interesting about hell, but my attention was all fixed on the half crown At the end of the lesson she put it back in her purse It was a great disappointment, a religious woman like that, you wouldn't think she'd bother about a thing like a half-crown

Another day she said she knew a priest who woke one night to find a fellow he didn't recognize leaning over the end of his bed The priest was a bit frightened—naturally enough—but he asked the fellow what he wanted, and the fellow said in a deep, husky voice that he wanted to go to confession The priest said it was an awkward time and wouldn't it do in the morning, but the fellow said that last time he went to confession, there was

in a heap of salt and then ate them. He hated her blind fumbling for things, and the way she produced snuff box and purse and even sweets from her bosom, unpinning her blouse and shivering. He hated her and everything about her, and was quite irreconcilable. Neither beatings from his father nor coaxings from his mother would induce him to tolerate the old woman. Nora, his elder sister, was on excellent terms with her, did messages for her and got pennies in reward, but even the pennies, even when Nora grigged him with them till she drove him into hysterics, even these did not induce him to speak nicely to his grandmother.

As ill luck would have it his mother had got a week's work picking fruit in the nurseries, and to spite him Nora refused to give him his dinner in the front room, as his mother did to take him from under the old woman's eyes.

I want me dinner in the room, he said.

Well, you won't get it, snapped Nora. As if you hadn't us heart scalded enough as it is! You'll take it in here or do without it.

I want it in the room, he repeated, and began to sob.

Och, aye, said his grandmother sourly, drawing the old knitted shawl more tightly about her shoulders. I suppose 'tis all my fault. Give it to him in the room, Nora girl. Give it to him in the room, and he can do without his pinny on Saturday.

I won't, replied Nora. The dirty spoiled suppurating little caffer! Shut up now or I'll scratch your eyes out.

Micky wailed louder than before.

'Tis all me ma's fault, continued his sister. Giving him bad habits.

His grandmother took another pinch of snuff and smoothed down her dirty grey hair in the middle.

I won't be a trouble to ye long, she declared, her voice trembling with self-pity. I know I'm a bother to ye, but twill soon be over when ye carry me to me long home. Soon enough soon enough ye'll be rid of the poor ould woman. Up in Kilcromin 'tisn't there they'll refuse me or be ashamed to sit with me.

Eat your dinner, you plague! shouted Nora, catching him a clout over the ear.

one sin he kept back, being ashamed to mention it, and now it was always on his mind. Then the priest knew it was a bad case, because the fellow was after making a bad confession and committing a mortal sin. He got up to dress, and just then the cock crew in the yard outside, and—lo and behold!—when the priest looked around there was no sign of the fellow, only a smell of burning timber, and when the priest looked at his bed didn't he see the print of two hands burned in it? That was because the fellow had made a bad confession. This story made a shocking impression on me.

But the worst of all was when she showed us how to examine our conscience. Did we take the name of the Lord, our God, in vain? Did we honour our father and our mother? (I asked her did this include grandmothers and she said it did.) Did we love our neighbours as ourselves? Did we covet our neighbour's goods? (I thought of the way I felt about the penny that Nora got every Friday.) I decided that, between one thing and another, I must have broken the whole ten commandments, all on account of that old woman, and so far as I could see, so long as she remained in the house I had no hope of ever doing anything else.

I was scared to death of confession. The day the whole class went I let on to have a toothache, hoping my absence wouldn't be noticed, but at three o'clock, just as I was feeling safe, along comes a chap with a message from Mrs. Ryan that I was to go to confession myself on Saturday and be at the chapel for communion with the rest. To make it worse, Mother couldn't come with me and sent Nora instead.

Now that girl had ways of tormenting me that Mother never knew of. She held my hand as we went down the hill, smiling sadly and saying how sorry she was for me, as if she were bringing me to the hospital for an operation.

Oh, God help us! she moaned. Isn't it a terrible pity you weren't a good boy? Oh, Jackie, my heart bleeds for you! How will you ever think of all your sins? Don't forget you have to tell him about the time you kicked Gran on the shin.

Lemme go! I said, trying to drag myself free of her. I don't want to go to confession at all.

I will not! I will not! he screamed, and when she grabbed him he shouted and kicked and tore and bit

There was a terrible scene that ended by his taking refuge beneath the table in the darkness, sobbing madly. He had a bread knife in one hand and a small heavy pot in the other with which he lashed out at Nora whenever she tried to crawl underneath to dislodge him. His grandmother and Nora knew there would be trouble if his mother came in and found him like that, so their approaches became more and more tender until at last they were offering him sweets and pennies to come out and eat his dinner in the room. But the softer they grew the more savage he became, and at last his mother did come in and find him. They caught it, and Micky was petted and fed back to sanity.

Then they had their innings. Nora, the little spy, told his father all about it, his father tried to beat him, his mother intervened, and there was another scene. It always worked out that way, that his father and Nora were on one side, his mother and he on the other, and between them the intruder, the big, dirty old peasant woman with her rosary beads twined about her wrist.

Next day the black bonneted instructress was there again with her dolman and her rings. This time it was to tell them what a terrible crime it was to keep a secret from the priest. Oh, a terrible crime that was! No sin, however dreadful in itself, could be as bad as the sin of concealing it and making a bad confession. She had a long rigmarole of a story about a man who once did such a thing and, to all appearances, became very holy afterwards. All the people admired and respected him, and when he died, they were so certain that his soul had gone straight to heaven that they didn't even bother to pray for him. But some time later his ghost appeared and went about telling everyone his secret sin and how he had been damned because of it. And even while it was speaking his ghost had not ceased to burn and writhe, and after it had disappeared the room was full of the smell of roasted flesh. This story made a great impression on Micky and exasperated his already strained nerves.

At home another scene. This time it was really his fault. Neither Nora nor his grandmother was speaking to him, and Micky sat

But sure, you'll have to go to confession, Jackie, she replied in the same regretful tone. Sure, if you didn't, the parish priest would be up to the house, looking for you. Isn't, God knows that I'm not sorry for you. Do you remember the time you tried to kill me with the bread knife under the table? And the language you used to me? I don't know what he'll do with you at all, Jackie. He might have to send you up to the bishop.

I remember thinking bitterly that she didn't know the half of what I had to tell—if I told it. I knew I couldn't tell it, and understood perfectly why the fellow in Miss Ryan's story made a bad confession, it seemed to me a great shame that people wouldn't stop criticizing him. I remember that steep hill down to the church, and the sunlit hillsides beyond the valley of the river which I saw in the gaps between the houses like Adam's last glimpse of Paradise.

Then, when she had manoeuvred me down the long flight of steps to the chapel yard, Nora suddenly changed her tone. She became the raging malicious devil she really was.

There you are! she said with a yelp of triumph, hurling me through the church door. And I hope he'll give you the penitential psalms, you dirty little caffer!

I knew then I was lost, given up to eternal justice. The door with the coloured glass panels swung shut behind me, the sunlight went out and gave place to deep shadow, and the wind whistled outside so that the silence within seemed to crackle like ice under my feet. Nora sat in front of me by the confession box. There were a couple of old women ahead of her, and then a miserable-looking poor devil came and wedged me in at the other side so that I couldn't escape even if I had the courage. He joined his hands and rolled his eyes in the direction of the roof, muttering aspirations in an anguished tone, and I wondered had he a grandmother too. Only a grandmother could account for a fellow behaving in that heartbroken way, but he was better off than I, for he at least could go and confess his sins, while I would make a bad confession and then die in the night and be continually coming back and burning people's furniture.

Nora's turn came, and I heard the sound of something slam

in a corner reading his book, an adventure story full of pirates and desert islands. The old woman went to brew a cup of tea for herself, and when he heard her bare feet padding across the kitchen, in spite of himself he looked up, all his hatred concentrated on her in an instant. Then as she reached for the cup from the shelf something broke in him and he began to cry. She heard him and looked round and raised her dirty hand to heaven.

Oh, the malice! she said in a horrified tone. The malice!

And so a terrible week passed, and Saturday came, the day he was to make his first confession. Because of the distance he had to come he was allowed to make it by himself in the parish church. Nora brought him down by the hand, and all the way kept telling him what a doing over the priest would give him. Outside the church he stuck his two feet in the pathway and refused to enter. She dragged him after her, only turning to address a whoop of glee or a fresh threat to him.

Ah, she said, I hope he'll give you the penitential psalms. That'll cure you, you caffer!

I don't want to go, whined Micky.

You'll have to go, you'll have to go,' she chanted triumphantly. Or the parish priest will be up to the house with a stick looking for you.

The church was an old one with two iron gates and an old stone front. All about the yard were trees. There was no stained glass in it, and the white light was broken here and there by boughs that lifted themselves against the window panes. Once within the door the fear of God came on Micky. He gave himself up for lost and allowed himself to be led noisily through the vaulted silence, the intense and magical silence that seemed to have frozen within the ancient walls, buttressing them and lifting upon its shoulders the high pointed wooden roof. In the street outside, yet seeming a million miles away, in another world, a ballad singer was drawing a ballad Micky knew well, and over which he had often shed a patriotic tear.

*Adieu, adieu to Dublin town, for I must now away
Likewise Cork city where I spent so many a happy day*

ming, and then her voice as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, and then another slam, and out she came. God, the hypocrisy of women! Her eyes were lowered, her head was bowed and her hands were joined very low down on her stomach, and she walked up the aisle to the side altar looking like a saint. You never saw such an exhibition of devotion, and I remembered the devilish malice with which she had tormented me all the way from our door, and wondered were all religious people like that, really. It was my turn now. With the fear of damnation in my soul I went in, and the confessional door closed of itself behind me.

It was pitch dark and I couldn't see priest or anything else. Then I really began to be frightened. In the darkness it was a matter between God and me, and He had all the odds. He knew what my intentions were before I even started, I had no chance. All I had ever been told about confession got mixed up in my mind, and I knelt to one wall and said, "Bless me, father, for I have sinned, this is my first confession." I waited for a few minutes, but nothing happened, so I tried it on the other wall. Nothing happened there either. He had me spotted all right.

It must have been then that I noticed the shelf at about one height with my head. It was really a place for grown up people to rest their elbows, but in my distracted state I thought it was probably the place you were supposed to kneel. Of course it was on the high side and not very deep, but I was always good at climbing and managed to get up all right. Staying up was the trouble. There was room only for my knees, and nothing you could get a grip on but a sort of wooden moulding a bit above it. I held on to the moulding and repeated the words a little louder and this time something happened all right. A slide was slammed back, a little light entered the box, and a man's voice said, "Who's there?"

'Tis me, father, I said for fear he mightn't see me and go away again. I couldn't see him at all. The place the voice came from was under the moulding, about level with my knees, so I took a good grip on the moulding and swung myself down till I saw the astonished face of a young priest looking up at me. He had to put his head on one side to see me, and I had to put mine on one side.

*When I am in Bermudas the view I shall deplore
Farewell farewell my native land I mean the shamrock shore*

Nora sat in front of him on the bench beside the confessional box. There were a few old women before her, and afterwards a thin, sad-looking man with long hair came and sat beside Micky. In the intense silence of the church that seemed to grow deeper from the plaintive moaning of the ballad singer he could hear the buzz buzz buzz of a woman's voice in the box buzz buzz buzz and then the ba ba ba of the priest's. And then the soft thud of something that signalled the end of the confession, and out came the woman head lowered, hands joined, looking neither to right nor left and tiptoed up the altar to say her penance. And again the buzz-buzz, a rush of sibilants, and the stern deep note of the priest's voice.

It seemed only a matter of seconds before Nora rose, and with a whispered injunction disappeared from his sight. He was all alone. Alone, and next to be heard, and with the fear of damnation in his soul, knowing as he did that he was about to make a bad confession and that nothing could save him. He looked at the sad-faced man. He was gazing at the roof with hands joined in prayer. A woman in a red blouse and black shawl had taken her place below him. She put a pin in her teeth, fluffed her hair out roughly with her hand, brushed it sharply back, then, with bowed head caught it in a knot and pinned it on her neck. Micky heard the slide go and Nora emerged. He rose, and looked at her with a hatred that was quite inappropriate to the occasion and the place. Her hands were joined as far down as she could possibly hold them, her eyes were modestly lowered, and her face had an expression of the most rapt and tender recollection. With death in his heart Micky crept into the box and closed the door behind him.

He was in pitch darkness. He could see no priest or anything else. And anything he had ever heard of confession simply rose in tumult in his mind. He knelt to the righthand wall and said, Bless me, father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession. Nothing happened. The wall made no reply. He repeated it, louder. Still it gave no answer. Then he turned to the opposite

to see him, so we were more or less talking to one another upside down. It struck me as a queer way of hearing confessions, but I didn't feel it my place to criticize.

Bless me, father, for I have sinned, this is my first confession, I rattled off in all one breath, and swung myself down the least shade more to make it easier for him.

What are you doing up there? he shouted in an angry voice, and the strain the politeness was putting on my hold of the moulding, and the shock of being addressed in such an uncivil tone, were too much for me. I lost my grip, tumbled, and hit the door with an unmerciful wallop before I found myself flat on my back in the middle of the aisle. The people who had been waiting stood up with their mouths open. The priest opened the door of the middle box and came out, pushing his biretta back from his forehead, he looked something terrible. Then Nora came scampering down the aisle.

Oh, you dirty little caffler! she said. I might have known you'd do it. I might have known you'd disgrace me. I can't leave you out of my sight for one minute.

Before I could even get to my feet to defend myself she bent down and gave me a clip across the ear. This reminded me that I was so stunned I had even forgotten to cry, so that people might think I wasn't hurt at all, when in fact I was probably maimed for life. I gave a roar out of me.

What's all this about? the priest hissed, getting angrier than ever and pushing Nora off me. How dare you hit the child like that, you little vixen?

But I can't do my penance with him, father, Nora cried, cocking an outraged eye up at him.

Well, go and do it, or I'll give you some more to do, he said, giving me a hand up. Was it coming to confession you were, my poor man? he asked me.

Twice, father, said I with a sob.

Oh, he said respectfully, a big hefty fellow like you must have terrible sins. Is this your first?

wall, genuflected first then again went on his knees and repeated the charm This time he was certain he would receive a reply, but none came He repeated the process with the remaining wall, again without effect He had the feeling of someone with an unfamiliar machine of pressing buttons at random And finally the thought struck him that God knew, God knew all about the bad confession he had intended to make, and had made him deaf and blind so that he could neither hear nor discern the priest

Then, as his eyes grew accustomed to the blackness, he perceived something he had not noticed up to this a sort of shelf at about the height of his head The purpose of this eluded him for a moment but then he understood It was for kneeling on

He had always pried himself upon his powers of climbing but this was a tougher proposition than a gas-lamp or a telegraph pole, and there wasn't as much as a foothold to be discovered He slipped twice before he even succeeded in getting his knee on it, and the strain of drawing the rest of himself up was almost more than he was capable of However, he did at last get his two knees on it, there was just room for those, but his legs hung down uncomfortably and the edge of the shelf bruised his shin He joined his hands and pressed the last remaining button He uttered his *Open Sesame* to the corner

At the same moment the slide was pushed back and a dim light streamed into the little box There was an uncomfortable silence, and then an alarmed voice asked, *Who's there? What's wrong?* Micky found it was extremely difficult to speak into the grille, which was on a level with his knees, but he got a firm grip of the moulding above it, bent his head sideways and up and found himself looking almost upside down through the grille The priest also had his head cocked sideways and up, and Micky, whose knees were being tortured by this new position, felt it was a very queer way to hear confessions

Tis me, he piped

What? exclaimed a deep, frightened and angry voice, and the sombre figure at the other side of the grille stood bolt upright, disappearing almost entirely from Micky's view *What's this? What are you doing there? What's the meaning of it, I say?*

"Tis, father, said I

Worse and worse, he said gloomily The crimes of a lifetime I don't know will I get rid of you at all today You'd better wait now till I'm finished with these old ones You can see by the looks of them they haven't much to tell

I will, father, I said with something approaching joy

The relief of it was really enormous Nora stuck out her tongue at me from behind his back, but I couldn't even be bothered retorting I knew from the very moment that man opened his mouth that he was intelligent above the ordinary When I had time to think, I saw how right I was It only stood to reason that a fellow confessing after seven years would have more to tell than people that went every week The crimes of a lifetime, exactly as he said It was only what he expected, and the rest was the cackle of old women and girls with their talk of hell, the bishop, and the penitential psalms That was all they knew I started to make my examination of conscience and barring the one bad business of my grandmother it didn't seem so bad

The next time, the priest steered me into the confession box himself and left the shutter back the way I could see him get in and sit down at the further side of the grille from me

Well, now, he said, what do they call you?

Jackie, father, said I

And what's a trouble to you Jackie?

Father, I said, feeling I might as well get it over while I had him in good humour, I had it all arranged to kill my grandmother

He seemed a bit shaken by that, all right, because he said nothing for quite a while

My goodness, he said at last, that'd be a shocking thing to do What put that into your head?

Father, I said, feeling very sorry for myself, she's an awful woman

Is she? he asked What way is she awful?

She takes porter, father, I said, knowing well from the way

And with the shock Micky felt his hands lose their grip and his legs their balance. He discovered himself tumbling into space, and tumbling he knocked his head against the door, the door shot open, and he fell clear into the centre of the aisle. The middle door opened and out came a small, dark haired priest with the biretta forward on his head. At the same moment Nora came skeltering madly down the aisle.

Lord God!" she cried. The sniffing little caffier. I knew he'd do it. I knew he'd disgrace me. He received a clout across the ear which suddenly reminded him that for some strange reason he hadn't yet begun to cry, and that people might possibly think he wasn't hurt at all. He did cry then, with a vengeance. Nora slapped him again.

What's this? What's this? cried the priest. Don't attempt to beat the child, you little vixen!

I can't do me pinance with him, cried Nora shrilly, cocking a shocked eye up at the priest as though wondering how he dared to interfere on behalf of disorder. He have me driven mad. Stop your crying, you ignorant scut! Crying in the chapel! Stop it now or I'll make you cry at the other side of your ugly face.

Run away out of this and let the unfortunate child alone! growled the priest. He suddenly began to laugh, took out his pocket-handkerchief and wiped Micky's face. You're not hurt, sure you're not? What's your name?

Through his sobs, Micky told him.

Well, Micky, you're a grand young fellow, you are so! Never mind your old sister. Show us your head. Ah, 'tis only a tiny bump, 'twill be better before you're twice married. So you're coming to confession?

'I am, father, replied Micky, his tears dwindling to sobs.

Is it your first?

'Tis, father.

Well now, Micky, wait five minutes till I get rid of these two old ones, and we'll have a great old talk. Will you?

I will, father.

With a feeling of great importance that somehow glowed through his tears like a sunrift behind a shower, Micky took his seat opposite the confessional. Nora stuck out her tongue at him,

Mother talked of it that this was a mortal sin, and hoping it would make the priest take a more favourable view of my case

Oh, my! he said, and I could see he was impressed

And snuff, father, said I

‘That’s a bad case, sure enough, Jackie,’ he said

And she goes round in her bare feet, father, I went on in a rush of self pity, and she knows I don’t like her, and she gives pennies to Nora and none to me, and my da sides with her and flakes me, and one night I was so heart scalded I made up my mind I’d have to kill her

And what would you do with the body? he asked with great interest

I was thinking I could chop that up and carry it away in a barrow I have, I said

Begor, Jackie, he said, do you know you’re a terrible child?

I know, father, I said, for I was just thinking the same thing myself. I tried to kill Nora too with a bread knife under the table, only I missed her

Is that the little girl that was beating you just now? he asked

‘Tis, father

‘Someone will go for her with a bread-knife one day, and he won’t miss her,’ he said rather cryptically. You must have great courage. Between ourselves, there’s a lot of people I’d like to do the same to but I’d never have the nerve. Hanging is an awful death

Is it, father?’ I asked with the deeper interest—I was always very keen on hanging. Did you ever see a fellow hanged?

Dozens of them, he said solemnly. And they all died roaring. Jay! I said

Oh, a horrible death! he said with great satisfaction. Lots of the fellows I saw killed their grandmothers too, but they all said ‘twas never worth it’

He had me there for a full ten minutes talking, and then walked out the chapel yard with me. I was genuinely sorry to part with

but he did not even bother to reply. A great feeling of relief was welling up within him. The sense of oppression that had been weighing him down for a week, the knowledge that he was about to make a bad confession, disappeared. It was all old women and girls and their talk. He would tell everything, everything, to this priest, and take whatever punishment was coming to him like a man. There was nothing to show he had been weeping but an occasional sniff.

This time the priest kept the slide open for him and showed him what to do and where to kneel. And then they had a great chat, all about where Micky went to school, and who was teaching him, and what his father's job was, and what he wanted to be when he grew up. And when the time came to tell his sins, Micky, not wishing to keep the priest in doubt a moment longer about the type of child he had to deal with, bowed his head, clenched his fists and replied:

Father, I made it up to kill me grandmother.

Oh, said the priest with polite interest. Your grandmother.

So then Micky had to explain what sort of woman his grandmother was, that she drank porter, took snuff and went about the house in her bare feet. It was all made infinitely easier because the priest never once took his eyes off Micky's face, and at every few words interrupted with a sympathetic 'Tut tut!' or 'Well! well!' As he seemed to be so interested and understanding, Micky thought he might as well tell him the whole thing: how he had planned to come behind her while she was eating a meal of potatoes and hit her over the head with a hatchet. They had a discussion about the hatchet. The priest thought a knife would have been better, as there would be a danger that the old woman would scream. Micky admitted that he hadn't thought of that, but this wasn't quite true, as he had thought of it vaguely, but had rejected it because he couldn't imagine himself running a knife into her. On the other hand, the priest considered his plan for disposing of the body most ingenious. He proposed to make a cart out of an orange box which he could get at the shop for threepence and take her out that way in pieces. The pieces he intended to bury in a deserted field a few hundred yards away from the house. He told how he had rehearsed the burial on two occasions after dark, steal-

him, because he was the most entertaining character I'd ever met in the religious line. Outside, after the shadow of the church, the sunlight was like the roaring of waves on a beach, it dazzled me, and when the frozen silence melted and I heard the screech of trams on the road my heart soared. I knew now I wouldn't die in the night and come back, leaving marks on my mother's furniture. It would be a great worry to her, and the poor soul had enough.

Nora was sitting on the railing, waiting for me, and she put on a very sour puss when she saw the priest with me. She was mad jealous because a priest had never come out of the church with her.

Well, she asked coldly, after he left me, what did he give you?

Three Hail Marys, I said.

'Three Hail Marys, she repeated incredulously. You mustn't have told him anything.

I told him everything, I said confidently.

About Gran and all?

About Gran and all.

(All she wanted was to be able to go home and say I'd made a bad confession.)

Did you tell him you went for me with the bread-knife? she asked with a frown.

I did to be sure.

And he only gave you three Hail Marys?

'That's all.

She slowly got down from the railing with a baffled air. Clearly, this was beyond her. As we mounted the steps back to the main road she looked at me suspiciously.

What are you sucking? she asked.

Bullseyes.'

'Was it the priest gave them to you?'

'Twas."

ing out with a cardboard box and a trowel, and burying it by starlight

Lord! exclaimed the priest 'You must have been frightened

Ah, no, only a bit, said Micky

But wouldn't they see the blood on the car?

'They would not I'd wrap up the bits in paper

I suppose you could do that, admitted the priest But all the same I don't know I often thought of killing people myself, but I'm not like you I'd never have the nerve And hanging is an awful death

Is it? asked Micky, responding to the brightness of a new theme

Oh, an awful blooming death!

Did you ever see a fellow hanged?

Me? Hundreds of them, and they all died roaring No, Micky, I'm afraid I'd never be brave enough for it And besides, what would your father do?

How, father?

'Well, what would you do if someone went and bashed your mother's head in with a hatchet and then cut her up in bits and took her away in a cart to bury her?

Lord, father, said Micky, catching his lip with horror, I never thought of that

'Well, there you are! No, Micky, before you do a thing like that you ought to consider the consequences Think it over well, and come back and tell me Only, mind, I'm not going to help you When I think of the fellows I saw being hanged'

For three years Micky went to confession to him every Saturday Then one day it all came back to him, he grew hot and cold by turns, and afterwards he went to that priest no more When he saw him in the street he ran miles to avoid him As he died some years later they never spoke again But one night in a Paris hotel Micky remembered it all, and it was as if tears were falling within his mind, and then it seemed as though window or door were suddenly opened and magic caught him by the hair

'Lord God,' she wailed bitterly, some people have all the
luck! 'Tis no advantage to anybody trying to be good I might
just as well be a sinner like you

1952

LEO TOLSTOY



How Much Land Does a Man Need?

An elder sister came to visit her younger sister in the country. The elder was married to a shopkeeper in town, the younger to a peasant in the village. As the sisters sat over their tea talking, the elder began to boast of the advantages of town life, saying how comfortably they lived there, how well they dressed, what fine clothes her children wore, what good things they ate and drank, and how she went to the theater, promenades, and entertainments.

The younger sister was piqued, and in turn disparaged the life of a shopkeeper, and stood up for that of a peasant.

I wouldn't change my way of life for yours, said she. We may live roughly, but at least we're free from worry. You live in better style than we do, but though you often earn more than you need, you're very likely to lose all you have. You know the proverb, Loss and gain are brothers twain. It often happens that people who're wealthy one day are begging their bread the next. Our way is safer. Though a peasant's life is not a rich one, it's long. We'll never grow rich, but we'll always have enough to eat.

The elder sister said sneeringly.

Enough? Yes, if you like to share with the pigs and the calves! What do you know of elegance or manners! However much your good man may slave, you'll die as you live—on a dung heap—and your children the same.

Well, what of that? replied the younger sister. Of course our work is rough and hard. But on the other hand, it's sure, and we need not bow to anyone. But you, in your towns, are surrounded by temptations, today all may be right, but tomorrow the Evil One may tempt your husband with cards, wine, or women, and all will go to ruin. Don't such things happen often enough?

Pahom, the master of the house, was lying on the top of the stove and he listened to the women's chatter

It is perfectly true, thought he. Busy as we are from childhood tilling mother earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!

The women finished their tea, chatted a while about dress, and then cleared away the tea things and lay down to sleep.

But the Devil had been sitting behind the stove, and had heard all that had been said. He was pleased that the peasant's wife had led her husband into boasting, and that he had said that if he had plenty of land he would not fear the Devil himself.

All right, thought the Devil. We'll have a tussle. I'll give you land enough, and by means of that land I'll get you into my power.

II

Close to the village there lived a lady, a small landowner who had an estate of about three hundred acres. She had always lived on good terms with the peasants until she engaged as her manager an old soldier, who took to burdening the people with fines. However careful Pahom tried to be, it happened again and again that now a horse of his got among the lady's oats, now a cow strayed into her garden, now his calves found their way into her meadows—and he always had to pay a fine.

Pahom paid up, but grumbled, and, going home in a temper, was rough with his family. All through that summer Pahom had much trouble because of this manager, and he was actually glad when winter came and the cattle had to be stabled. Though he grudged the fodder when they could no longer graze on the pasture land, at least he was free from anxiety about them.

In the winter the news got about that the lady was going to sell her land and that the keeper of the inn on the high road was bargaining for it. When the peasants heard this they were very much alarmed.

Well, thought they, if the innkeeper gets the land, he'll worry us with fines worse than the lady's manager. We all depend on that estate.

So the peasants went on behalf of their village Council and asked the lady not to sell the land to the innkeeper, offering her a better price for it themselves. The lady agreed to let them have it. Then the peasants tried to arrange for the village Council to buy the whole estate, so that it might be held by them all in common. They met twice to discuss it, but could not settle the matter, the Evil One sowed discord among them and they could not agree. So they decided to buy the land individually, each according to his means, and the lady agreed to this plan as she had to the other.

Presently Pahom heard that a neighbor of his was buying fifty acres, and that the lady had consented to accept one half in cash and to wait a year for the other half. Pahom felt envious.

Look at that, thought he, the land is all being sold, and I'll get none of it. So he spoke to his wife.

Other people are buying, said he, and we must also buy twenty acres or so. Life is becoming impossible. That manager is simply crushing us with his fines.

So they put their heads together and considered how they could manage to buy it. They had one hundred rubles laid by. They sold a colt and one half of their bees, hired out one of their sons as a farm hand, and took his wages in advance, borrowed the rest from a brother-in-law, and so scraped together half the purchase money.

Having done this, Pahom chose a farm of forty acres, some of it wooded, and went to the lady to bargain for it. They came to an agreement, and he shook hands with her upon it and paid her a deposit in advance. Then they went to town and signed the deeds, he paying half the price down, and undertaking to pay the remainder within two years.

So now Pahom had land of his own. He borrowed seed, and sowed it on the land he had bought. The harvest was a good one, and within a year he had managed to pay off his debts both to the lady and to his brother-in-law. So he became a landowner, plowing and sowing his own land, making hay on his own land, cutting his own trees, and feeding his cattle on his own pasture. When he went out to plow his fields, or to look at his growing corn, or at his grass meadows, his heart would fill with joy. The grass that grew and the flowers that bloomed there seemed to him unlike

any that grew elsewhere. Formerly, when he had passed by that land, it had appeared the same as any other land, but now it seemed quite different.

III

So Pahom was well contented, and everything would have been right if the neighboring peasants would only not have trespassed on his wheatfields and meadows. He appealed to them most civilly, but they still went on: now the herdsmen would let the village cows stray into his meadows, then horses from the night pasture would get among his corn. Pahom turned them out again and again and forgave their owners, and for a long time he forbore to prosecute anyone. But at last he lost patience and complained to the District Court. He knew it was the peasants' want of land, and no evil intent on their part, that caused the trouble, but he thought

I can't go on overlooking it, or they'll destroy all I have. They must be taught a lesson.

So he had them up, gave them one lesson, and then another, and two or three of the peasants were fined. After a time Pahom's neighbors began to bear him a grudge for this, and would now and then let their cattle on to his land on purpose. One peasant even got into Pahom's wood at night and cut down five young lime trees for their bark. Pahom, passing through the wood one day, noticed something white. He came nearer and saw the stripped trunks lying on the ground, and close by stood the stumps where the trees had been. Pahom was furious.

If he'd only cut one here and there it would have been bad enough, thought Pahom; but the rascal has actually cut down a whole clump. If I could only find out who did this, I'd get even with him.

He racked his brains as to who it could be. Finally he decided it must be Simon—no one else could have done it. So he went to Simon's homestead to have a look around, but he found nothing, and only had an angry scene. However, he now felt more certain than ever that Simon had done it, and he lodged a complaint. Simon was summoned. The case was tried, and retried, and at the

end of it all Simon was acquitted, there being no evidence against him Pahom felt still more aggrieved, and let his anger loose upon the Elder and the Judges

You let thieves grease your palms, said he If you were honest folk yourselves you wouldn't let a thief go free

So Pahom quarreled with the judges and with his neighbors Threats to burn his hut began to be uttered So though Pahom had more land, his place in the community was much worse than before

About this time a rumor got about that many people were moving to new parts

There's no need for me to leave my land, thought Pahom But some of the others may leave our village and then there'd be more room for us I'd take over their land myself and make my estate somewhat bigger I could then live more at ease As it is, I'm still too cramped to be comfortable

One day Pahom was sitting at home, when a peasant, passing through the village, happened to drop in He was allowed to stay the night, and supper was given him Pahom had a talk with this peasant and asked him where he came from The stranger answered that he came from beyond the Volga, where he had been working One word led to another, and the man went on to say that many people were settling in those parts He told how some people from his village had settled there They had joined the community there and had had twenty five acres per man granted them The land was so good he said, that the rye sown on it grew as high as a horse, and so thick that five cuts of a sickle made a sheaf One peasant, he said, had brought nothing with him but his bare hands, and now he had six horses and two cows of his own

Pahom's heart kindled with desire

Why should I suffer in this narrow hole, if one can live so well elsewhere? he thought I'll sell my land and my homestead here, and with the money I'll start afresh over there and get everything new In this crowded place one is always having trouble But I must first go and find out all about it myself

Toward summer he got ready and started out He went down the Volga on a steamer to Samara, then walked another three hundred miles on foot, and at last reached the place It was just

as the stranger had said. The peasants had plenty of land: every man had twenty-five acres of communal land given him for his use, and anyone who had money could buy, besides, at a ruble-and-a-half an acre, as much good freehold land as he wanted.

Having found out all he wished to know, Pahom returned home as autumn came on, and began selling off his belongings. He sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and all his cattle, and withdrew from membership in the village. He only waited till the spring, and then started with his family for the new settlement.

IV

As soon as Pahom and his family reached their new abode, he applied for admission into the Council of a large village. He stood treat to the Elders and obtained the necessary documents. Five shares of communal land were given him for his own and his sons' use—that is to say—125 acres (not all together, but in different fields) besides the use of the communal pasture. Pahom put up the buildings he needed and bought cattle. Of the communal land alone he had three times as much as at his former home, and the land was good wheat-land. He was ten times better off than he had been. He had plenty of arable land and pasturage, and could keep as many head of cattle as he liked.

At first, in the bustle of building and settling down, Pahom was pleased with it all, but when he got used to it he began to think that even here he hadn't enough land. The first year he sowed wheat on his share of the communal land and had a good crop. He wanted to go on sowing wheat, but had not enough communal land for the purpose, and what he had already used was not available, for in those parts wheat is sown only on virgin soil or on fallow land. It is sown for one or two years, and then the land lies fallow till it is again overgrown with steppe grass. There were many who wanted such land, and there was not enough for all, so that people quarreled about it. Those who were better off wanted it for growing wheat, and those who were poor wanted it to let to dealers, so that they might raise money to pay their taxes. Pahom wanted to sow more wheat, so he rented land from a dealer for a year. He sowed much wheat and had a fine crop,

but the land was too far from the village—the wheat had to be carted more than ten miles. After a time Pahom noticed that some peasant dealers were living on separate farms and were growing wealthy, and he thought

If I were to buy some freehold land and have a homestead on it it would be a different thing altogether. Then it would all be fine and close together.

The question of buying freehold land recurred to him again and again.

He went on in the same way for three years, renting land and sowing wheat. The seasons turned out well and the crops were good, so that he began to lay by money. He might have gone on living contentedly, but he grew tired of having to rent other people's land every year, and having to scramble for it. Wherever there was good land to be had, the peasants would rush for it and it was taken up at once, so that unless you were sharp about it you got none. It happened in the third year that he and a dealer together rented a piece of pasture land from some peasants, and they had already plowed it up, when there was some dispute and the peasants went to law about it, and things fell out so that the labor was all lost.

'If it were my own land, thought Pahom, I should be independent, and there wouldn't be all this unpleasantness.

So Pahom began looking out for land which he could buy, and he came across a peasant who had bought thirteen hundred acres, but having got into difficulties was willing to sell again cheap. Pahom bargained and haggled with him, and at last they settled the price at fifteen hundred rubles, part in cash and part to be paid later. They had all but clinched the matter when a passing dealer happened to stop at Pahom's one day to get feed for his horses. He drank tea with Pahom, and they had a talk. The dealer said that he was just returning from the land of the Bashkirs, far away, where he had bought thirteen thousand acres of land, all for a thousand rubles. Pahom questioned him further, and the dealer said

All one has to do is to make friends with the chiefs. I gave away about one hundred rubles worth of silk robes and carpets, besides a case of tea, and I give wine to those who would drink

it, and I got the land for less than three kopecks an acre And he showed Pahom the title deed, saying

The land lies near a river, and the whole steppe is virgin soil

Pahom plied him with questions, and the dealer said

There's more land there than you could cover if you walked a year, and it all belongs to the Bashkirs They're as simple as sheep, and land can be got almost for nothing

There, now,' thought Pahom, with my one thousand rubles, why should I get only thirteen hundred acres, and saddle myself with a debt besides? If I take it out there, I can get more than ten times as much for my money

V

Pahom inquired how to get to the place, and as soon as the grain dealer had left him he prepared to go there himself He left his wife to look after the homestead, and started on his journey, taking his hired man with him They stopped at a town on their way and bought a case of tea, some wine, and other presents, as the grain dealer had advised

On and on they went until they had gone more than three hundred miles, and on the seventh day they came to a place where the Bashkirs had pitched their round tents It was all just as the dealer had said The people lived on the steppe, by a river, in felt-covered tents They neither tilled the ground nor ate bread Their cattle and horses grazed in herds on the steppe The colts were tethered behind the tents, and the mares were driven to them twice a day The mares were milked, and from the milk kumiss was made It was the women who prepared the kumiss and they also made cheese As far as the men were concerned, drinking kumiss and tea, eating mutton, and playing on their pipes was all they cared about They were all stout and merry and all the summer long they never thought of doing any work They were quite ignorant, and knew no Russian, but were good natured enough

As soon as they saw Pahom, they came out of their tents and gathered around their visitor An interpreter was found, and

Pahom told them he had come about some land. The Bashkirs seemed very glad, they took Pahom and led him into one of the best tents, where they made him sit on some down cushions placed on a carpet, while they sat around him. They gave him some tea and kumiss, and had a sheep killed, and gave him mutton to eat. Pahom took presents out of his cart and distributed them among the Bashkirs, and divided the tea amongst them. The Bashkirs were delighted. They talked a great deal among themselves, and then told the interpreter what to say.

They wish to tell you, said the interpreter, that they like you, and that it is our custom to do all we can to please a guest and to repay him for his gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us which of the things we possess please you best, that we may present them to you.

What pleases me best here, answered Pahom, is your land. Our land is crowded and the soil is worn out, but you have plenty of land, and it is good land. I never saw the likes of it.

The interpreter told the Bashkirs what Pahom had said. They talked among themselves for a while. Pahom could not understand what they were saying, but saw that they were much amused and heard them shout and laugh. Then they were silent and looked at Pahom while the interpreter said:

"They wish me to tell you that in return for your presents they will gladly give you as much land as you want. You have only to point it out with your hand and it is yours."

The Bashkirs talked again for a while and began to dispute. Pahom asked what they were disputing about, and the interpreter told him that some of them thought they ought to ask their Chief about the land and not act in his absence, while others thought there was no need to wait for his return.

VI

While the Bashkirs were disputing, a man in a large fox-fur cap appeared on the scene. They all became silent and rose to their feet. The interpreter said: "This is our Chief himself."

Pahom immediately fetched the best dressing gown and five pounds of tea, and offered these to the Chief. The Chief accepted.

them, and seated himself in the place of honor. The Bashkirs at once began telling him something. The Chief listened for a while, then made a sign with his head for them to be silent, and addressing himself to Pahom, said in Russian:

Well, so be it. Choose whatever piece of land you like, we have plenty of it.

How can I take as much as I like? thought Pahom. I must get a deed to make it secure, or else they may say: It is yours, and afterward may take it away again.

Thank you for your kind words, he said aloud. You have much land, and I only want a little. But I should like to be sure which portion is mine. Could it not be measured and made over to me? Life and death are in God's hands. You good people give it to me, but your children might wish to take it back again.

You are quite right, said the Chief. We will make it over to you.

I heard that a dealer had been here, continued Pahom, and that you gave him a little land too, and signed title deeds to that effect. I should like to have it done in the same way.

The Chief understood.

Yes, replied he, that can be done quite easily. We have a scribe, and we will go to town with you and have the deed properly sealed.

And what will be the price? asked Pahom.

Our price is always the same: one thousand rubles a day."

Pahom did not understand.

A day? What measure is that? How many acres would that be?

We do not know how to reckon it out, said the Chief. We sell it by the day. As much as you can go around on your feet in a day is yours, and the price is one thousand rubles a day.

Pahom was surprised.

But in a day you can get around a large tract of land, he said.

The Chief laughed.

It will all be yours! said he. But there is one condition. If you don't return on the same day to the spot whence you started, your money is lost.

But how am I to mark the way that I have gone?

Why, we shall go to any spot you like, and stay there. You must start from that spot and make your round, taking a spade with you. Wherever you think necessary, make a mark. At every turning, dig a hole and pile up the turf, then afterward we will go around with a plow from hole to hole. You may make as large a circuit as you please, but before the sun sets you must return to the place you started from. All the land you cover will be yours.

Pahom was delighted. It was decided to start early next morning. They talked a while, and after drinking some more kumiss and eating some more mutton, they had tea again and then the night came on. They gave Pahom a feather bed to sleep on, and the Bashkirs dispersed for the night, promising to assemble the next morning at daybreak and ride out before sunrise to the appointed spot.

VII

Pahom lay on the feather bed, but could not sleep. He kept thinking about the land.

What a large tract I'll mark off! thought he, I can easily do thirty-five miles in a day. The days are long now, and within a circuit of thirty-five miles what a lot of land there will be! I'll sell the poorer land, or let it to peasants, but I'll pick out the best and farm it myself. I'll buy two ox teams and hire two more laborers. About a hundred and fifty acres shall be plowland, and I'll pasture cattle on the rest.

Pahom lay awake all night, and dozed off only just before dawn. Hardly were his eyes closed when he had a dream. He thought he was lying in that same tent and heard somebody chuckling outside. He wondered who it could be, and rose and went out, and he saw the Bashkir Chief sitting in front of the tent holding his sides and rolling about with laughter. Going nearer to the Chief, Pahom asked: What are you laughing at? But he saw that it was no longer the Chief, but the gram dealer who had recently stopped at his house and had told him about the land. Just as Pahom was going to ask: Have you been here long? he saw

that it was not the dealer, but the peasant who had come up from the Volga, long ago, to Pahom's old home. Then he saw that it was not the peasant either, but the Devil himself with hoofs and horns, sitting there and chuckling, and before him lay a man, prostrate on the ground, barefooted, with only trousers and a shirt on. And Pahom dreamed that he looked more attentively to see what sort of man it was lying there, and he saw that the man was dead, and that it was himself. Horror struck, he awoke.

What things one dreams about! thought he.

Looking around he saw through the open door that the dawn was breaking.

It's time to wake them up, thought he. We ought to be starting.

He got up, roused his man (who was sleeping in his cart), bade him harness, and went to call the Bashkirs.

It's time to go to the steppe to measure the land, he said.

The Bashkirs rose and assembled, and the Chief came, too. Then they began drinking kumiss again, and offered Pahom some tea, but he would not wait.

If we are to go, let's go. It's high time, said he.

VIII

The Bashkirs got ready and they all started. Some mounted on horses and some in carts. Pahom drove in his own small cart with his servant and took a spade with him. When they reached the steppe, the red dawn was beginning to kindle. They ascended a hillock (called by the Bashkirs a *shikh*) and, dismounting from their carts and their horses, gathered in one spot. The Chief came up to Pahom and, stretching out his arm toward the plain.

See, said he, all this, as far as your eye can reach, is ours. You may have any part of it you like.

Pahom's eyes glistened. It was all virgin soil, as flat as the palm of your hand, as black as the seed of a poppy, and in the hollows different kinds of grasses grew breast high.

The Chief took off his fox fur cap, placed it on the ground, and said:

This will be the mark Start from here, and return here again
All the land you go around shall be yours

Pahom took out his money and put it on the cap Then he took off his outer coat, remaining in his sleeveless undercoat He unfastened his girdle and tied it tight below his stomach, put a little bag of bread into the breast of his coat, and tying a flask of water to his girdle, he drew up the tops of his boots, took the spade from his man, and stood ready to start He considered for some moments which way he had better go—it was tempting every where

No matter, he concluded, I'll go toward the rising sun

He turned his face to the east, stretched himself, and waited for the sun to appear above the rim

I must lose no time, he thought, and it's easier walking while it's still cool

The sun's rays had hardly flashed above the horizon when Pahom, carrying the spade over his shoulder, went down into the steppe

Pahom started walking neither slowly nor quickly After having gone a thousand yards he stopped dug a hole and placed pieces of turf one on another to make it more visible Then he went on, and now that he had walked off his stiffness he quickened his pace After a while he dug another hole

Pahom looked back The hillock could be distinctly seen in the sunlight, with the people on it, and the glittering iron rims of the cartwheels At a rough guess Pahom concluded that he had walked three miles It was growing warmer, he took off his undercoat, slung it across his shoulder, and went on again It had grown quite warm now, he looked at the sun—it was time to think of breakfast

The first shift is done, but there are four in a day, and it's too soon yet to turn But I'll just take off my boots, said he to himself

He sat down, took off his boots stuck them into his girdle, and went on It was easy walking now

I'll go on for another three miles, thought he, and then turn to the left This spot is so fine that it would be a pity to lose it The further one goes, the better the land seems

He went straight on for a while, and when he looked around, the hillock was scarcely visible and the people on it looked like black ants, and he could just see something glistening there in the sun

Ah, thought Pahom, I have gone far enough in this direction, it's time to turn. Besides, I'm in a regular sweat, and very thirsty

He stopped, dug a large hole, and heaped up pieces of turf. Next he untied his flask, had a drink, and then turned sharply to the left. He went on and on, the grass was high, and it was very hot.

Pahom began to grow tired. He looked at the sun and saw that it was noon.

Well, he thought, I must have a rest.

He sat down, and ate some bread and drank some water, but he did not lie down, thinking that if he did he might fall asleep. After sitting a little while, he went on again. At first he walked easily, the food had strengthened him, but it had become terribly hot and he felt sleepy. Still he went on, thinking: An hour to suffer, a lifetime to live.

He went a long way in this direction also, and was about to turn to the left again, when he perceived a damp hollow. It would be a pity to leave that out, he thought. Flax would do well there. So he went on past the hollow and dug a hole on the other side of it before he made a sharp turn. Pahom looked toward the hillock. The heat made the air hazy; it seemed to be quivering, and through the haze the people on the hillock could scarcely be seen.

'Ah, thought Pahom, I have made the sides too long, I must make this one shorter.' And he went along the third side, stepping faster. He looked at the sun: it was nearly halfway to the horizon, and he had not yet done two miles of the third side of the square. He was still ten miles from the goal.

No, he thought, though it will make my land lopsided, I must hurry back in a straight line now. I might go too far, and as it is I have a great deal of land.

So Pahom hurriedly dug a hole and turned straight toward the hillock.

IX

Pahom went straight toward the hillock, but he now walked with difficulty. He was exhausted from the heat, his bare feet were cut and bruised, and his legs began to fail. He longed to rest, but it was impossible if he meant to get back before sunset. The sun waits for no man, and it was sinking lower and lower.

Oh, Lord, ' he thought, if only I have not blundered trying for too much! What if I am too late?

He looked toward the hillock and at the sun. He was still far from his goal, and the sun was already near the rim of the sky.

Pahom walked on and on, it was very hard walking, but he went quicker and quicker. He pressed on, but was still far from the place. He began running, threw away his coat, his boots, his flask, and his cap, and kept only the spade which he used as a support.

What am I to do? he thought again. I've grasped too much and ruined the whole affair. I can't get there before the sun sets.

And this fear made him still more breathless. Pahom kept on running, his soaking shirt and trousers stuck to him, and his mouth was parched. His breast was working like a blacksmith's bellows, his heart was beating like a hammer, and his legs were giving way as if they did not belong to him. Pahom was seized with terror lest he should die of the strain.

Though afraid of death, he could not stop.

'After having run all that way they will call me a fool if I stop now,' thought he.

And he ran on and on, and drew near and heard the Bashkirs yelling and shouting to him, and their cries inflamed his heart still more. He gathered his last strength and ran on.

The sun was close to the rim of the sky and, cloaked in mist, looked large, and red as blood. Now, yes, now, it was about to set! The sun was quite low, but he was also quite near his goal. Pahom could already see the people on the hillock waving their arms to make him hurry. He could see the fox fur cap on the ground and the money in it, and the Chief sitting on the ground holding his sides. And Pahom remembered his dream.

‘There’s plenty of land, thought he, but will God let me live on it? I have lost my life, I have lost my life! Never will I reach that spot!’

Pahom looked at the sun, which had reached the earth one side of it had already disappeared. With all his remaining strength he rushed on, bending his body forward so that his legs could hardly follow fast enough to keep him from falling. Just as he reached the hillock it suddenly grew dark. He looked up—the sun had already set!

He gave a cry. All my labor has been in vain, thought he, and was about to stop, but he heard the Bashkirs still shouting, and remembered that though to him, from below, the sun seemed to have set, they on the hillock could still see it. He took a long breath and ran up the hillock. It was still light there. He reached the top and saw the cap. Before it sat the Chief, laughing and holding his sides. Again Pahom remembered his dream, and he uttered a cry: his legs gave way beneath him, he fell forward and reached the cap with his hands.

Ah, that’s a fine fellow! exclaimed the Chief. He has gained much land!

Pahom’s servant came running up and tried to raise him, but he saw that blood was flowing from his mouth. Pahom was dead.

The Bashkirs clicked their tongues to show their pity.

His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in, and buried him in it.

Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



Young Goodman Brown

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village, but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

'Dearest heart,' whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, 'prythee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afraid of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year.'

'My love and my Faith,' replied young Goodman Brown, 'of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?'

'Then God bless you!' said Faith, with the pink ribbons, and may you find all well when you come back.

'Amen!' cried Goodman Brown. 'Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee.'

So they parted, and the young man pursued his way until being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

Poor little Faith! thought he, for his heart smote him. 'What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But no,

no, twould kill her to think of it Well, she s a blessed angel on earth, and after this one night I ll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind It was all as lonely as could be, and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead, so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude

There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree, said Goodman Brown to himself, and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree He arose at Goodman Brown s approach and walked onward side by side with him

You are late, Goodman Brown, said he The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago

Faith kept me back a while, replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features Still they might have been taken for father and son And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor s dinner table or in King William s court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was

his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

Come, Goodman Brown, cried his fellow traveller, this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary.

Friend, said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wotst of.

'Sayest thou so?' replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go, and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet.

Too far! too far! exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs, and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept——

Such company, thou wouldst say, observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans, and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem, and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both, and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake.

If it be as thou sayest, replied Goodman Brown, I marvel they never spoke of these matters, or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness.

'Wickedness or not,' said the traveller with the twisted staff,

'I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me, the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman, and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too—— But these are state secrets.

Can this be so? cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council, they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day.

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity, but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again, then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on, but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

Well, then, to end the matter at once, said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart, and I'd rather break my own.

Nay, if that be the case, answered the other, even go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm.

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall, said he. But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going.

Be it so, said his fellow traveller. Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path.

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

The devil! screamed the pious old lady.

Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend? observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed? cried the good dame. Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane—

Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe, said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

Ah, your worship knows the recipe, cried the old lady, cackling aloud. So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it, for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion tonight. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling.

That can hardly be, answered her friend. I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse, but here is my staff, if you will.

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

That old woman taught me my catechism, said the young man, and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the

path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

Friend, said he, stubbornly, 'my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven—is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?'

You will think better of this by and by, said his acquaintance, composedly. Sit here and rest yourself a while, and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along.

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding place, but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even

for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

Of the two, reverend sir,' said the voice like the deacons, I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of Indian powwows who after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion.

Mighty well, Deacon Gookin! replied the solemn old tones of the minister. Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done you know until I get on the ground.

The hoofs clattered again, and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

'With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!' cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that

he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men, and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain, and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

Faith! shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation, and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, Faith! Faith! as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices fading into far off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

My Faith is gone! cried he, after one stupefied moment. There is no good on earth, and sin is but a name. Come, devil, for to thee is this world given.

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians, while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

Ha! ha! ha! 'roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him Let us hear which will laugh loudest Think not to frighten me with your deviltry Come witch come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown You may as well fear him as he fear you

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices He knew the tune, it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting house The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once

A grave and dark-clad company, quoth Goodman Brown

In truth they were such Among them, quivering to and fro

between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

But where is Faith? thought Goodman Brown, and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin and darkly hinted at far more Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung, and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ, and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock

shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

Bring forth the converts! cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

Welcome my children, said the dark figure to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!

They turned, and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen, the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

There, resumed the sable form, are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households, how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom, how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers' wealth, and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole

guest to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bed-chamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other.

They did so, and, by the blaze of the hell kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

Lo, there ye stand, my children, said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race.

Welcome, repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

Faith! Faith! cried the husband, look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one.

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a

roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp, while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. What God doth the wizard pray to? quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will, but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, wakening suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith, and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he

scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

ROBERT PENN WARREN



Blackberry Winter

It was getting into June and past eight o'clock in the morning, but there was a fire—even if it wasn't a big fire, just a fire of chunks—on the hearth of the big stone fireplace in the living room. I was standing on the hearth, almost into the chimney, hunched over the fire, working my bare toes slowly on the warm stone. I relished the heat which made the skin of my bare legs warp and creep and tingle, even as I called to my mother, who was somewhere back in the dining room or kitchen, and said: "But it's June, I don't have to put them on!"

"You put them on if you are going out," she called.

I tried to assess the degree of authority and conviction in the tone, but at that distance it was hard to decide. I tried to analyze the tone, and then I thought what a fool I had been to start out the back door and let her see that I was barefoot. If I had gone out the front door or the side door she would never have known, not till dinner time anyway, and by then the day would have been half gone and I would have been all over the farm to see what the storm had done and down to the creek to see the flood. But it had never crossed my mind that they would try to stop you from going barefoot in June, no matter if there had been a gully washer and a cold spell.

Nobody had ever tried to stop me in June as long as I could remember, and when you are nine years old, what you remember seems forever, for you remember everything and everything is important and stands big and full and fills up Time and is so solid that you can walk around and around it like a tree and look at it. You are aware that time passes, that there is a movement in time, but that is not what Time is. Time is not a movement, a flow-

ing, a wind then, but is, rather, a kind of climate in which things are, and when a thing happens it begins to live and keeps on living and stands solid in Time like the tree that you can walk around And if there is a movement, the movement is not Time itself, any more than a breeze is climate, and all the breeze does is to shake a little the leaves on the tree which is alive and solid When you are nine, you know that there are things that you don't know, but you know that when you know something you know it You know how a thing has been and you know that you can go barefoot in June You do not understand that voice from back in the kitchen which says that you cannot go barefoot outdoors and run to see what has happened and rub your feet over the wet shivery grass and make the perfect mark of your foot in the smooth, creamy, red mud and then muse upon it as though you had suddenly come upon that single mark on the glistening auroral beach of the world You have never seen a beach, but you have read the book and how the footprint was there

The voice had said what it had said, and I looked savagely at the black stockings and the strong, scuffed brown shoes which I had brought from my closet as far as the hearth rug I called once more, But it's June, and waited

It's June, the voice replied from far away, but it's blackberry winter

I had lifted my head to reply to that, to make one more test of what was in that tone when I happened to see the man

The fireplace in the living room was at the end, for the stone chimney was built, as in so many of the farmhouses in Tennessee, at the end of a gable, and there was a window on each side of the chimney Out of the window on the north side of the fireplace I could see the man When I saw the man I did not call out what I had intended, but, engrossed by the strangeness of the sight, watched him, still far off, come along the path by the edge of the woods

What was strange was that there should be a man there at all That path went along the yard fence, between the fence and the woods which came right down to the yard, and then on back past the chicken runs and on by the woods until it was lost to sight where the woods bulged out and cut off the back field

There the path disappeared into the woods. It led on back, I knew, through the woods and to the swamp, skirted the swamp where the big trees gave way to sycamores and water oaks and willows and tangled cane, and then led on to the river. Nobody ever went back there except people who wanted to gig frogs in the swamp or to fish in the river or to hunt in the woods, and those people, if they didn't have a standing permission from my father, always stopped to ask permission to cross the farm. But the man whom I now saw wasn't, I could tell even at that distance, a sportsman. And what would a sportsman have been doing down there after a storm? Besides, he was coming from the river, and nobody had gone down there that morning. I knew that for a fact, because if anybody had passed, certainly if a stranger had passed, the dogs would have made a racket and would have been out on him. But this man was coming up from the river and had come up through the woods. I suddenly had a vision of him moving up the grassy path in the woods, in the green twilight under the big trees, not making any sound on the path, while now and then, like drops off the eaves, a big drop of water would fall from a leaf or bough and strike a stiff oak leaf lower down with a small, hollow sound like a drop of water hitting tin. That sound, in the silence of the woods, would be very significant.

When you are a boy and stand in the stillness of woods, which can be so still that your heart almost stops beating and makes you want to stand there in the green twilight until you feel your very feet sinking into and clutching the earth like roots and your body breathing slow through its pores like the leaves—when you stand there and wait for the next drop to drop with its small, flat sound to a lower leaf, that sound seems to measure out something, to put an end to something, to begin something, and you cannot wait for it to happen and are afraid it will not happen, and then when it has happened, you are waiting again, almost afraid.

But the man whom I saw coming through the woods in my mind's eye did not pause and wait, growing into the ground and breathing with the enormous, soundless breathing of the leaves. Instead, I saw him moving in the green twilight inside my head as he was moving at that very moment along the path by the edge of the woods, coming toward the house. He was moving steadily,

but not fast, with his shoulders hunched a little and his head thrust forward, like a man who has come a long way and has a long way to go I shut my eyes for a couple of seconds thinking that when I opened them he would not be there at all There was no place for him to have come from, and there was no reason for him to come where he was coming, toward our house But I opened my eyes, and there he was, and he was coming steadily along the side of the woods He was not yet even with the back chicken yard

Mama, I called

You put them on, the voice said

There's a man coming, I called, out back '

She did not reply to that, and I guessed that she had gone to the kitchen window to look She would be looking at the man and wondering who he was and what he wanted, the way you always do in the country, and if I went back there now she would not notice right off whether or not I was barefoot So I went back to the kitchen

She was standing by the window I don't recognize him, she said not looking around at me

Where could he be coming from? I asked

I don't know, she said

What would he be doing down at the river? At night? In the storm?

She studied the figure out the window, then said, Oh, I reckon maybe he cut across from the Dunbar place

That was, I realized, a perfectly rational explanation He had not been down at the river in the storm, at night He had come over this morning You could cut across from the Dunbar place if you didn't mind breaking through a lot of elder and sassafras and blackberry bushes which had about taken over the old cross path, which nobody ever used any more That satisfied me for a moment, but only for a moment Mama, I asked, what would he be doing over at the Dunbar place last night?

Then she looked at me, and I knew I had made a mistake, for she was looking at my bare feet You haven't got your shoes on, she said

But I was saved by the dogs That instant there was a bark

which I recognized as Sam, the collie, and then a heavier, churning kind of bark which was Bully, and I saw a streak of white as Bully tore round the corner of the back porch and headed out for the man. Bully was a big, bone white bull dog the kind of dog that they used to call a farm bull dog but that you don't see any more, heavy chested and heavy headed, but with pretty long legs. He could take a fence as light as a hound. He had just cleared the white paling fence toward the woods when my mother ran out to the back porch and began calling, Here you, Bully! Here you!

Bully stopped in the path, waiting for the man, but he gave a few more of those deep gargling, savage barks that reminded you of something down a stone lined well. The red clay mud, I saw, was splashed up over his white chest and looked exciting like blood.

The man, however, had not stopped walking even when Bully took the fence and started at him. He had kept right on coming. All he had done was to switch a little paper parcel which he carried from the right hand to the left and then reach into his pants pocket to get something. Then I saw the glitter and knew that he had a knife in his hand, probably the kind of mean knife just made for devilment and nothing else, with a blade as long as the blade of a frog sticker, which will snap out ready when you press a button in the handle. That knife must have had a button in the handle, or else how could he have had the blade out glittering so quick and with just one hand?

Pulling his knife against the dogs was a funny thing to do, for Bully was a big, powerful brute and fast, and Sam was all right. If those dogs had meant business they might have knocked him down and ripped him before he got a stroke in. He ought to have picked up a heavy stick, something to take a swipe at them with and something which they could see and respect when they came at him. But he apparently did not know much about dogs. He just held the knife blade close against the right leg, low down, and kept on moving down the path.

Then my mother had called, and Bully had stopped. So the man let the blade of the knife snap back into the handle, and dropped it into his pocket, and kept on coming. Many women

would have been afraid with the strange man who they knew had that knife in his pocket That is, if they were alone in the house with nobody but a nine year-old boy And my mother was alone, for my father had gone off, and Dellie, the cook, was down at her cabin because she wasn't feeling well But my mother wasn't afraid She wasn't a big woman, but she was clear and brisk about everything she did and looked everybody and everything right in the eye from her own blue eyes in her tanned face She had been the first woman in the county to ride a horse astride (that was back when she was a girl and long before I was born), and I have seen her snatch up a pump gun and go out and knock a chicken hawk out of the air like a busted skeet when he came over her chicken yard She was a steady and self-reliant woman, and when I think of her now after all the years she has been dead, I think of her brown hands, not big but somewhat square for a woman's hands, with square-cut nails They looked, as a matter of fact more like a young boy's hands than a grown woman's But back then it never crossed my mind that she would ever be dead

She stood on the back porch and watched the man enter the back gate, where the dogs (Bully had leaped back into the yard) were dancing and muttering and giving sidelong glances back to my mother to see if she meant what she had said The man walked right by the dogs, almost brushing them, and didn't pay them any attention I could see now that he wore old khaki pants, and a dark wool coat with stripes in it, and a gray felt hat He had on a gray shirt with blue stripes in it, and no tie But I could see a tie, blue and reddish, sticking in his side coat-pocket Everything was wrong about what he wore He ought to have been wearing blue jeans or overalls, and a straw hat or an old black felt hat, and the coat, granting that he might have been wearing a wool coat and not a jumper, ought not to have had those stripes Those clothes, despite the fact that they were old enough and dirty enough for any tramp, didn't belong there in our back yard, coming down the path, in Middle Tennessee, miles away from any big town, and even a mile off the pike

When he got almost to the steps, without having said anything, my mother, very matter-of-factly, said, Good morning

"Good morning," he said, and stopped and looked her over He

did not take off his hat and under the brim you could see the perfectly unmemorable face, which wasn't old and wasn't young, or thick or thin. It was grayish and covered with about three days of stubble. The eyes were a kind of nondescript, muddy hazel, or something like that, rather bloodshot. His teeth, when he opened his mouth, showed yellow and uneven. A couple of them had been knocked out. You knew that they had been knocked out, because there was a scar, not very old, there on the lower lip just beneath the gap.

Are you hunting work? my mother asked him.

Yes, he said—not yes, mam—and still did not take off his hat.

"I don't know about my husband, for he isn't here," she said, and didn't mind a bit telling the tramp, or whoever he was, with the mean knife in his pocket, that no man was around, but I can give you a few things to do. The storm has drowned a lot of my chicks. Three coops of them. You can gather them up and bury them. Bury them deep so the dogs won't get at them. In the woods. And fix the coops the wind blew over. And down yonder beyond that pen by the edge of the woods are some drowned poults. They got out and I couldn't get them in. Even after it started to rain hard. Poults haven't got any sense.

What are them things—poults? he demanded, and spat on the brick walk. He rubbed his foot over the spot, and I saw that he wore a black, pointed toe low shoe, all cracked and broken. It was a crazy kind of shoe to be wearing in the country.

Oh, they're young turkeys, my mother was saying. And they haven't got any sense. I oughtn't to try to raise them around here with so many chickens, anyway. They don't thrive near chickens, even in separate pens. And I won't give up my chickens. Then she stopped herself and resumed briskly on the note of business.

When you finish that, you can fix my flower beds. A lot of trash and mud and gravel has washed down. Maybe you can save some of my flowers if you are careful.

'Flowers,' the man said, in a low, impersonal voice which seemed to have a wealth of meaning, but a meaning which I could not fathom. As I think back on it, it probably was not pure contempt. Rather, it was a kind of impersonal and distant marveling that he should be on the verge of grubbing in a flower bed. He said the word, and then looked off across the yard.

'Yes, flowers,' my mother replied with some asperity, as though she would have nothing said or implied against flowers. And they were very fine this year. Then she stopped and looked at the man. Are you hungry? she demanded.

Yeah, he said.

I'll fix you something, she said, 'before you get started. She turned to me. Show him where he can wash up, she commanded, and went into the house.

I took the man to the end of the porch where a pump was and where a couple of wash pans sat on a low shelf for people to use before they went into the house. I stood there while he laid down his little parcel wrapped in newspaper and took off his hat and looked around for a nail to hang it on. He poured the water and plunged his hands into it. They were big hands, and strong looking but they did not have the creases and the earth color of the hands of men who work outdoors. But they were dirty, with black dirt ground into the skin and under the nails. After he had washed his hands, he poured another basin of water and washed his face. He dried his face, and with the towel still dangling in his grasp, stepped over to the mirror on the house wall. He rubbed one hand over the stubble on his face. Then he carefully inspected his face, turning first one side and then the other, and stepped back and settled his striped coat down on his shoulders. He had the movements of a man who had just dressed up to go to church or a party—the way he settled his coat and smoothed it and scanned himself in the mirror.

Then he caught my glance on him. He glared at me for an instant out of the bloodshot eyes, then demanded in a low, harsh voice: What you looking at?

Nothing, I managed to say, and stepped back a step from him. He flung the towel down, crumpled, on the shelf, and went toward the kitchen door and entered without knocking.

My mother said something to him which I could not catch. I started to go in again, then thought about my bare feet, and decided to go back of the chicken yard, where the man would have to come to pick up the dead chicks. I hung around behind the chicken house until he came out.

He moved across the chicken yard with a fastidious, not quite finicking motion, looking down at the curdled mud flecked with

bits of chicken-droppings The mud curled up over the soles of his black shoes I stood back from him some six feet and watched him pick up the first of the drowned chicks He held it up by one foot and inspected it

There is nothing deader looking than a drowned chick The feet curl in that feeble, empty way which back when I was a boy, even if I was a country boy who did not mind hog killing or flog-gigging, made me feel hollow in the stomach Instead of looking plump and fluffy, the body is stungy and limp with the fluff plastered to it, and the neck is long and loose like a little string of rag And the eyes have that bluish membrane over them which makes you think of a very old man who is sick about to die

The man stood there and inspected the chick. Then he looked all around as though he didn't know what to do with it

"There's a great big old basket in the shed, I said, and pointed to the shed attached to the chicken house

He inspected me as though he had just discovered my presence, and moved toward the shed

"There's a spade there, too, I added

He got the basket and began to pick up the other chicks, picking each one up slowly by a foot and then flinging it into the basket with a nasty, snapping motion Now and then he would look at me out of the bloodshot eyes Every time he seemed on the verge of saying something, but he did not Perhaps he was building up to say something to me but I did not wait that long His way of looking at me made me so uncomfortable that I left the chicken yard

Besides, I had just remembered that the creek was in flood, over the bridge, and that people were down there watching it So I cut across the farm toward the creek When I got to the big tobacco field I saw that it had not suffered much The land lay right and not many tobacco plants had washed out of the ground But I knew that a lot of tobacco round the country had been washed right out My father had said so at breakfast

My father was down at the bridge When I came out of the gap in the osage hedge into the road, I saw him sitting on his mare over the heads of the other men who were standing around, admiring the flood The creek was big here, even in low water, for

only a couple of miles away it ran into the river, and when a real flood came, the red water got over the pike where it dipped down to the bridge, which was an iron bridge, and high over the floor and even the side railings of the bridge. Only the upper iron work would show, with the water boiling and frothing red and white around it. That creek rose so fast and so heavy because a few miles back it came down out of the hills, where the gorges filled up with water in no time when a rain came. The creek ran in a deep bed with limestone bluffs along both sides until it got within three quarters of a mile of the bridge, and when it came out from between those bluffs in flood it was boiling and hissing and steaming like water from a fire hose.

Whenever there was a flood, people from half the county would come down to see the sight. After a gully-washer there would not be any work to do anyway. If it didn't ruin your crop, you couldn't plow and you felt like taking a holiday to celebrate. If it did ruin your crop, there wasn't anything to do except to try to take your mind off the mortgage, if you were rich enough to have a mortgage, and if you couldn't afford a mortgage you needed something to take your mind off how hungry you would be by Christmas. So people would come down to the bridge and look at the flood. It made something different from the run of days.

There would not be much talking after the first few minutes of trying to guess how high the water was this time. The men and kids just stood around, or sat their horses or mules, as the case might be, or stood up in the wagon beds. They looked at the strangeness of the flood for an hour or two, and then somebody would say that he had better be getting on home to dinner and would start walking down the gray, puddled limestone pike, or would touch heel to his mount and start off. Everybody always knew what it would be like when he got down to the bridge, but people always came. It was like church or a funeral. They always came, that is, if it was summer and the flood unexpected. Nobody ever came down in winter to see high water.

When I came out of the gap in the bodock hedge, I saw the crowd, perhaps fifteen or twenty men and a lot of kids, and saw my father sitting his mare, Nellie Gray. He was a tall, lumber man

and carried himself well I was always proud to see him sit a horse, he was so quiet and straight, and when I stepped through the gap of the hedge that morning, the first thing that happened was, I remember, the warm feeling I always had when I saw him up on a horse, just sitting I did not go toward him, but skirted the crowd on the far side, to get a look at the creek For one thing, I was not sure what he would say about the fact that I was bare foot But the first thing I knew, I heard his voice calling, Seth!

I went toward him, moving apologetically past the men, who bent their large, red or thin, sallow faces above me I knew some of the men, and knew their names, but because those I knew were there in a crowd, mixed with the strange faces, they seemed foreign to me, and not friendly I did not look up at my father until I was almost within touching distance of his heel Then I looked up and tried to read his face, to see if he was angry about my being barefoot Before I could decide anything from that impassive, high boned face, he had leaned over and reached a hand to me Grab on, he commanded

I grabbed on and gave a little jump, and he said, Up see daisy! and whisked me, light as a feather, up to the pommel of his McClellan saddle

You can see better up here, he said, slid back on the cantle a little to make me more comfortable, and then, looking over my head at the swollen, tumbling water, seemed to forget all about me But his right hand was laid on my side, just above my thigh, to steady me

I was sitting there as quiet as I could, feeling the faint stir of my father's chest against my shoulders as it rose and fell with his breath, when I saw the cow At first, looking up the creek I thought it was just another big piece of driftwood steaming down the creek in the ruck of water but all at once a pretty good size boy who had climbed part way up a telephone pole by the pike so that he could see better yelled out, 'Golly-damn, look at that air cow!

Everybody looked It was a cow all right, but it might just as well have been driftwood, for it was dead as a chunk, rolling and roiling down the creek, appearing and disappearing, feet up or head up, it didn't matter which

The cow started up the talk again. Somebody wondered whether it would hit one of the clear places under the top girder of the bridge and get through or whether it would get tangled in the drift and trash that had piled against the upright girders and braces. Somebody remembered how about ten years before so much driftwood had piled up on the bridge that it was knocked off its foundations. Then the cow hit. It hit the edge of the drift against one of the girders, and hung there. For a few seconds it seemed as though it might tear loose, but then we saw that it was really caught. It bobbed and heaved on its side there in a slow, grinding, uneasy fashion. It had a yoke around its neck, the kind made out of a forked limb to keep a jumper behind fence.

She shore jumped one fence, one of the men said.

And another: Well, she done jumped her last one, fer a fack.

Then they began to wonder about whose cow it might be. They decided it must belong to Milt Alley. They said that he had a cow that was a jumper and kept her in a fenced in piece of ground up the creek. I had never seen Milt Alley, but I knew who he was. He was a squatter and lived up the hills a way, on a shirt-tail patch of set on edge land, in a cabin. He was pore white trash. He had lots of children. I had seen the children at school, when they came. They were thin faced with straight sticky looking, dough colored hair, and they smelled something like old sour buttermilk, not because they drank so much buttermilk but because that is the sort of smell which children out of those cabins tend to have. The big Alley boy drew dirty pictures and showed them to the little boys at school.

That was Milt Alley's cow. It looked like the kind of cow he would have: a scrawny, old, sway backed cow, with a yoke around her neck. I wondered if Milt Alley had another cow.

Poppa, I said, do you think Milt Alley has got another cow?

You say Mr. Alley, my father said quietly.

Do you think he has?

No telling, my father said.

Then a big gangly boy, about fifteen, who was sitting on a scraggly little old mule with a piece of croker sack thrown across the saw tooth spine, and who had been staring at the cow, suddenly

said to nobody in particular, Reckin anybody ever et drownt cow?

He was the kind of boy who might just as well as not have been the son of Milt Alley, with his faded and patched overalls ragged at the bottom of the pants and the mud stiff brogans hanging off his skinny, bare ankles at the level of the mule's belly. He had said what he did, and then looked embarrassed and sullen when all the eyes swung at him. He hadn't meant to say it, I am pretty sure now. He would have been too proud to say it just as Milt Alley would have been too proud. He had just been thinking out loud, and the words had popped out.

There was an old man standing there on the pike, an old man with a white beard. Son, he said to the embarrassed and sullen boy on the mule, you live long enough and you'll find a man will eat anything when the time comes.

Time gonna come fer some folks this year, another man said.

Son, the old man said, in my time I et things a man don't like to think on. I was a sojer and I rode with Gint Forrester, and them things we et when the time come. I tell you I et meat what got up and run when you taken out yoie knife to cut a slice to put on the fire. You had to knock it down with a carbeen butt, it was so active. That air meat would jump like a bullfrog. It was so full of skippers.

But nobody was listening to the old man. The boy on the mule turned his sullen sharp face from him, dug a heel into the side of the mule and went off up the pike with a motion which made you think that any second you would hear mule bones clashing inside that lank and scrofulous hide.

Cy Dundee's boy, a man said, and nodded toward the figure going up the pike on the mule.

'Reckin Cy Dundee's young uns seen tmes they'd settle fer drownt cow, another man said.

The old man with the beard peered at them both from his weak slow eyes, first at one and then at the other. Live long enough, he said, and a man will settle fer what he kin git.

Then there was silence again, with the people looking at the red, foam-flecked water.

My father lifted the bridle rein in his left hand, and the mare

turned and walked around the group and up the pike. We rode on up to our big gate, where my father dismounted to open it and let me myself ride Nellie Gray through. When he got to the lane that led off from the drive about two hundred yards from our house, my father said, "Grab on." I grabbed on, and he let me down to the ground. "I'm going to ride down and look at my corn," he said. "You go on." He took the lane, and I stood there on the drive and watched him ride off. He was wearing cowhide boots and an old hunting coat, and I thought that that made him look very military, like a picture. That and the way he rode.

I did not go to the house. Instead, I went by the vegetable garden and crossed behind the stables, and headed down for Dellie's cabin. I wanted to go down and play with Jebb, who was Dellie's little boy about two years older than I was. Besides, I was cold. I shivered as I walked, and I had goose flesh. The mud which crawled up between my toes with every step I took was like ice. Dellie would have a fire, but she wouldn't make me put on shoes and stockings.

Dellie's cabin was of logs, with one side because it was on a slope, set on limestone chunks, with a little porch attached to it, and had a little whitewashed fence around it and a gate with plow points on a wire to clink when somebody came in and had two big white oaks in the yard and some flowers and a nice privy in the back with some honeysuckle growing over it. Dellie and Old Jebb, who was Jebb's father and who lived with Dellie and had lived with her for twenty-five years even if they never had got married, were careful to keep everything nice around their cabin. They had the name all over the community for being clean and clever. Negroes. Dellie and Jebb were what they used to call white-folks niggers. There was a big difference between their cabin and the other two cabins farther down where the other tenants lived. My father kept the other cabins weatherproof, but he couldn't undertake to go down and pick up after the litter they strewed. They didn't take the trouble to have a vegetable patch like Dellie and Jebb or to make preserves from wild plum, and jelly from crab apple the way Dellie did. They were shiftless, and my father was always threatening to get shed of them. But

he never did. When they finally left, they just up and left on their own, for no reason, to go and be shiftless somewhere else. Then some more came. But meanwhile they lived down there, Matt Rawson and his family, and Sid Turner and his, and I played with their children all over the farm when they weren't working. But when I wasn't around they were mean sometimes to Little Jebb. That was because the other tenants down there were jealous of Dellie and Jebb.

I was so cold that I ran the last fifty yards to Dellie's gate. As soon as I had entered the yard, I saw that the storm had been hard on Dellie's flowers. The yard was, as I have said, on a slight slope, and the water running across had gutted the flower beds and washed out all the good black woods earth which Dellie had brought in. What little grass there was in the yard was plastered sparsely down on the ground, the way the drainage water had left it. It reminded me of the way the fluff was plastered down on the skin of the drowned chicks that the strange man had been picking up, up in my mother's chicken yard.

I took a few steps up the path to the cabin, and then I saw that the drainage water had washed a lot of trash and filth out from under Dellie's house. Up toward the porch, the ground was not clean any more. Old pieces of rag, two or three rusted cans, pieces of rotten rope, some hunks of old dog dung, broken glass, old paper, and all sorts of things like that had washed out from under Dellie's house to foul her clean yard. It looked just as bad as the yards of the other cabins, or worse. It was worse, as a matter of fact, because it was a surprise. I had never thought of all that filth being under Dellie's house. It was not anything against Dellie that the stuff had been under the cabin. Trash will get under any house. But I did not think of that when I saw the foulness which had washed out on the ground which Dellie sometimes used to sweep with a twig broom to make nice and clean.

I picked my way past the filth, being careful not to get my bare feet on it, and mounted to Dellie's door. When I knocked, I heard her voice telling me to come in.

It was dark inside the cabin, after the daylight, but I could make out Dellie piled up in bed under a quilt, and Little Jebb crouched by the hearth, where a low fire simmered. Howdy, I said to Dellie, how you feeling?

Her big eyes, the whites surprising and glaring in the black face, fixed on me as I stood there, but she did not reply. It did not look like Dellie, or act like Dellie, who would grumble and bustle around our kitchen, talking to herself, scolding me or Little Jebb, clanking pans, making all sorts of unnecessary noises and mutterings like an old fashioned black steam thrasher engine when it has got up an extra head of steam and keeps popping the governor and rumbling and shaking on its wheels. But now Dellie just lay up there on the bed, under the patch work quilt, and turned the black face, which I scarcely recognized, and the glaring white eyes to me.

How you feeling? I repeated

I se sick, the voice said croakingly out of the strange black face which was not attached to Dellie's big, squat body, but stuck out from under a pile of tangled bedclothes. Then the voice added
Mighty sick

I m sorry, I managed to say

The eyes remained fixed on me for a moment, then they left me and the head rolled back on the pillow. Sorry, the voice said, in a flat way which wasn't question or statement of any thing. It was just the empty word put into the air with no meaning or expression, to float off like a feather or a puff of smoke, while the big eyes, with the whites like the peeled white of hard boiled eggs, stared at the ceiling.

Dellie, I said after a minute, there's a tramp up at the house. He's got a knife.

She was not listening. She closed her eyes.

I tiptoed over to the hearth where Jebb was and crouched beside him. We began to talk in low voices. I was asking him to get out his train and play train. Old Jebb had put spool wheels on three cigar boxes and put wire links between the boxes to make a train for Jebb. The box that was the locomotive had the top closed and a length of broom stick for a smoke stack. Jebb didn't want to get the train out, but I told him I would go home if he didn't. So he got out the train, and the colored rocks, and fossils of crinoid stems, and other junk he used for the load, and we began to push it around, talking the way we thought trainmen talked, making a chuck chucking sound under the breath for the noise of the locomotive and now and then uttering low, cautious

toots for the whistle We got so interested in playing train that the toots got louder Then, before he thought, Jebb gave a good, loud *toot-toot*, blowing for a crossing

Come here, the voice said from the bed

Jebb got up slow from his hands and knees, giving me a sudden, naked, mimical look

Come here! the voice said

Jebb went to the bed Dellie propped herself weakly up on one arm, muttering, Come closer

Jebb stood closer

Last thing I do, I'm gonna do it, Dellie said Done tole you to be quiet

Then she slapped him It was an awful slap, more awful for the kind of weakness which it came from and brought to focus I had seen her slap Jebb before, but the slapping had always been the kind of easy slap you would expect from a good-natured, grumbling Negro woman like Dellie But this was different It was awful It was so awful that Jebb didn't make a sound The tears just popped out and ran down his face, and his breath came sharp, like gasps

Dellie fell back Can't even be sick, she said to the ceiling 'Git sick and they won't even let you lay They tromp all over you Can't even be sick Then she closed her eyes

I went out of the room I almost ran getting to the door, and I did run across the porch and down the steps and across the yard, not caring whether or not I stepped on the filth which had washed out from under the cabin I ran almost all the way home Then I thought about my mother catching me with the bare feet So I went down to the stables

I heard a noise in the crib, and opened the door There was Big Jebb, sitting on an old nail keg, shelling corn into a bushel basket I went in, pulling the door shut behind me, and crouched on the floor near him I crouched there for a couple of minutes before either of us spoke, and watched him shelling the corn

He had very big hands, knotted and grayish at the joints, with calloused palms which seemed to be streaked with rust with the rust coming up between the fingers to show from the back His hands were so strong and tough that he could take a

big ear of corn and rip the grains right off the cob with the palm of his hand, all in one motion, like a machine Work long as me he would say, and the good Lawd'll give you a hand lak cassion won't nuthin hurt" And his hands did look like cast iron, old cast iron streaked with rust

He was an old man, up in his seventies, thirty years or more older than Delhe but he was strong as a bull He was a squat sort of man, heavy in the shoulders, with remarkably long arms, the kind of build they say the river natives have on the Congo from paddling so much in their boats He had a round bullet head, set on powerful shoulders His skin was very black, and the thin hair on his head was now grizzled like tufts of old cotton batting He had small eyes and a flat nose not big and the kindest and wisest old face in the world, the blunt, sad wise face of an old animal peering tolerantly out on the goings on of the merely human creatures before him He was a good man, and I loved him next to my mother and father I crouched there on the floor of the crib and watched him shell corn with the rusty cast-iron hands, while he looked down at me out of the little eyes set in the blunt face

Delhe says she's might sick, I said

Yeah, he said

What's she sick from?

Woman-mizry, he said

What's woman mizry?

Hit comes on em, he said Hit just comes on em when the time comes

What is it?

Hit is the change, he said Hit is the change of life and time

What changes?

You too young to know

Tell me

Time come and you find out everything '

I knew that there was no use in asking him any more When I asked him things and he said that, I always knew that he would not tell me So I continued to crouch there and watch him Now that I had sat there a little while, I was cold again

What you shiver fer? he asked me

"I m cold I m cold because it s blackberry winter, I said
Maybe tis and maybe taint, he said

'My mother says it is

Ain t sayen Miss Sallie doan know and ain't sayen she do But
folks doan know everything

Why isn t it blackberry winter?

'Too late fer blackberry winter Blackberries done bloomed'

She said it was

Blackberry winter just a leetle cold spell Hit come and then
hit go away, and hit is growed summer of a sudden lak a gun
shot Ain t no tellen hit will go way this time

It s June,' I said

June,' he replied with great contempt That what folks say
What June mean? Maybe hit is come cold to stay

'Why?

Cause this here old yearth is tahrd Hit is tahrd and ain t
gonna perduce Lawd let hit come rain one time forty days and
forty nights, cause He was tahrd of sinful folks Maybe this here
old yearth say to the Lawd, Lawd, I done plum tahrd, Lawd,
lemme rest And Lawd say, Yearth, you done yore best you give
em cawn and you give em taters, and all they think on is they
gut, and, Yearth, you kin take a rest

What will happen?

Folks will eat up everything The yearth won t perduce no
more Folks cut down all the trees and burn em cause they cold,
and the yearth won t grow no more I been tellen em I been tellen
folks Sayen, maybe this year, hit is the time But they doan listen
to me, how the yearth is tahrd Maybe this year they find out

Will everything die?

Everything and everybody, hit will be so

This year?

Ain t no tellen Maybe this year

My mother said it is blackberry winter, I said confidently, and
got up

Ain t sayen nuthin agin Miss Sallie, he said

I went to the door of the crib I was really cold now Running,
I had got up a sweat and now I was worse

I hung on the door, looking at Jebb, who was shelling corn again

There s a tramp came to the house,' I said I had almost forgotten the tramp

Yeah

He came by the back way What was he doing down there in the storm?

They comes and they goes, he said, and aint no tellen

He had a mean knife

The good ones and the bad ones, they comes and they goes Storm or sun, light or dark They is folks and they comes and they goes lak folks

I hung on the door, shivering

He studied me a moment, then said, You git on to the house You ketch yore death Then what yore mammy say?

I hesitated

You git, he said

When I came to the back yard, I saw that my father was standing by the back porch and the tramp was walking toward him They began talking before I reached them, but I got there just as my father was saying, I m sorrv, but I havent got any work I got all the hands on the place I need now I won t need any extra until wheat thrashing

The stranger made no reply, just looked at my father

My father took out his leather coin puse, and got out a half dollar He held it toward the man This is for half a day, he said

The man looked at the coin and then at my father, making no motion to take the money But that was the right amount A dollar a day was what you paid them back in 1910 And the man hadnt even worked half a day

Then the man reached out and took the coin He dropped it into the right side pocket of his coat Then he said, very slowly and without feeling I didnt want to work on your — farm

He used the word which they would have frailed me to death for using

I looked at my father s face and it was streaked white under

the sunburn Then he said, Get off this place Get off this place or I won't be responsible

The man dropped his right hand into his pants pocket It was the pocket where he kept the knife I was just about to yell to my father about the knife when the hand came back out with nothing in it The man gave a kind of twisted grin showing where the teeth had been knocked out above the new scar I thought that instant how maybe he had tried before to pull a knife on somebody else and had got his teeth knocked out

So now he just gave that twisted, sickish grin out of the unmemorable, grayish face, and then spat on the brick path The glob landed just about six inches from the toe of my father's right boot My father looked down at it, and so did I I thought that if the glob had hit my father's boot something would have happened I looked down and saw the bright glob, and on one side of it my father's strong cowhide boots, with the brass eyelets and the leather thongs, heavy boots splashed with good red mud and set solid on the bricks, and on the other side the pointed toe, broken black shoes, on which the mud looked so sad and out of place Then I saw one of the black shoes move a little, just a twitch first, then a real step backward

The man moved in a quarter circle to the end of the porch, with my father's steady gaze upon him all the while At the end of the porch, the man reached up to the shelf where the wash pans were to get his little newspaper wrapped parcel Then he disappeared around the corner of the house and my father mounted the porch and went into the kitchen without a word

I followed around the house to see what the man would do I wasn't afraid of him now, no matter if he did have the knife When I got around in front, I saw him going out the yard gate and starting up the drive toward the pike So I ran to catch up with him He was sixty yards or so up the drive before I caught up

I did not walk right up even with him at first, but trailed him, the way a kid will, about seven or eight feet behind, now and then running two or three steps in order to hold my place against his longer stride When I first came up behind him, he turned to give me a look, just a meaningless look, and then fixed his eyes up the drive and kept on walking

When we had got around the bend in the drive which cut the house from sight, and were going along by the edge of the woods, I decided to come up even with him. I ran a few steps, and was by his side, or almost, but some feet off to the right. I walked along in this position for a while, and he never noticed me. I walked along until we got within sight of the big gate that let on the pike.

Then I said, "Where did you come from?"

He looked at me then with a look which seemed almost surprised that I was there. Then he said, "It ain't none of yore business."

We went on another fifty feet.

Then I said, "Where are you going?"

He stopped, studied me dispassionately for a moment, then suddenly took a step toward me and leaned his face down at me. The lips jerked back, but not in any grin, to show where the teeth were knocked out and to make the scar on the lower lip come white with the tension.

He said, "Stop following me. You don't stop following me and I cut yore throat, you little son of a bitch."

Then he went on to the gate, and up the pike.

That was thirty-five years ago. Since that time my father and mother have died. I was still a boy, but a big boy, when my father got cut on the blade of a mowing machine and died of lockjaw. My mother sold the place and went to town to live with her sister. But she never took hold after my father's death, and she died within three years, right in middle life. My aunt always said, "Sallie just died of a broken heart, she was so devoted." Dellie is dead, too, but she died, I heard, quite a long time after we sold the farm.

As for Little Jebb, he grew up to be a mean and ficey Negro. He killed another Negro in a fight and got sent to the penitentiary, where he is yet, the last I heard tell. He probably grew up to be mean and ficey from just being picked on so much by the children of the other tenants, who were jealous of Jebb and Dellie for being thrifty and clever and being white folks' niggers.

Old Jebb lived forever. I saw him ten years ago and he was

about a hundred then, and not looking much different He was living in town then, on relief—that was back in the Depression—when I went to see him He said to me Too strong to die When I was a young feller just comen on and seen how things wuz, I prayed the Lawd I said, Oh, Lawd, gimme strength and meke me strong fer to do and to in dure The Lawd hearkened to my prayer He give me strength I was in duren proud fer being strong and me much man The Lawd give me my prayer and my strength But now He done gone off and fergot me and left me alone with my strength A man doan know what to pray fer, and him mortal

Jebb is probably living yet, as far as I know

That is what has happened since the morning when the tramp leaned his face down at me and showed his teeth and said Stop following me You don t stop following me and I cut yore throat, you little son-of-a-bitch That was what he said, for me not to follow him But I did follow him, all the years

1946

JEAN STAFFORD



A Reunion

Like cooled off lovers meeting again after a long separation we were excessively courteous. We plied our interrogations with a well bred inattention to their answers and we diligently observed all those amenities which are calculated to tame a difficult encounter. My father's letter (his calligraphy, I had noted, had neither become less neat nor more mature) had not stated his reason for inviting me to visit him. Moreover, in my reply, I had not told him why I was accepting, and I concluded that we were each activated by no more than curiosity, as the lovers would be, to know what alterations the years had accomplished in the other.

I learned that for seven years my father had, as usual, done a little reading, been occasionally ill, entertained a few guests, and had largely spent his time gardening. He learned that I had had an equal share of bad and good luck. Throughout the first hour of our reunion, coinciding happily (and by no means accidentally) with dinner, we exchanged, like the calling cards of strangers, the names of his guests and the names of the places where I had lived. We pursued the recent tributaries of our lives and never once returned to seek the old meanderings of our mutual experience.

Proud of his garden and because there was a full moon that night, my father took me out after our coffee to show me the gladioli and the dahlias which had commenced to bloom a week or so before. As he stooped amongst them to caress their petals, I noticed for the first time that he was an old man. Livid and sharp as one of his trees in winter, his large and noble nose and his insistent cheekbones had been uncovered nearly to the skele-

ton, yet, elsewhere, particularly in the hands that quivered as they reached toward the flowers, the skin was too ample an integument and stood up in limp ridges over the bones. He was a small man. Now he seemed even smaller, and he had died up every where save in his brown eyes. He was like one of the bearded weeds that every summer invaded his garden, had I touched his skin, I thought, I would have found it harsh like the hollyhock leaf. Into his voice, which had always been half an octave higher than a man's should be, there had crept the note of senility's sour protestations. Yet, in a sense, he looked exactly as he had when I last saw him: his seven static years had done no more than reinforce what had been there all along.

It was here that I had seen him last. I had told him good-by while he pruned the rhododendrons. Then, I had longed to confirm our kinship by some gesture which, no matter how brief, would unite us for its duration: a look, perceiving me at last from the eyes that benevolently studied the shrub and shears; a clasp of the hands that tenderly ministered to the leaves and blossoms, or a word from the mouth that an hour ago had elegantly and incisively said, "Of course you may stay as long as you like. It is your privilege." I had come out to him, believing that the crisis had not been reached yet, that there was still time to deflect the catastrophe. But he did not look up, and the stretch of grass between us seemed unnavigable. As I stared at him stupidly, a naive tear in either eye, I realized that my misery was gauche for I knew that my father did not see our estrangement in the heroic dimensions that I did. And so I had turned at last and facing the house, my back to him, had said, "Well, good-by." Before he echoed me, I heard, several times, the snap of his shears and the rustling of the rhododendron leaves.

We moved tonight from shrub to shrub and from the bed of zinnias to the rose bushes, and he murmured that he hoped I was not bored, although he knew I was not interested in flowers ("something, as you remember," he said, "I never understood in you"), but that it was his habit to spend half an hour in the garden every evening after dinner. An abrupt movement in the grass unnerved my citted feet and I asked my father if there were snakes here still.

Of course,' he laughed. One wouldn't want one's garden to be incomplete. Besides, they kill the spiders.

We slowly approached the far end of the garden where his splendid azaleas were planted and the japonica and where three mountain ash trees dropped their scarlet globules on to my mother's grave. Our advance, deliberate and silent like that of acolytes toward the sanctuary, enclosed us in a parenthesis whose solemnity, for me, was trumped up, and I, to demolish the ambiguity of my role, said lightly: How the ash trees have flourished.

Yes. The soil here welcomes anything. John Stuart, whom you may remember, was surprised when he came to visit me some years ago at my choice of decoration for this part of the garden. Red^p says he. And something so foreign to us? I'd thought you would plant junipers. And still, when I had explained my reason to him, he had to agree that I'd been right. You recall the reason? That she loved this special red? I have no doubt other friends of mine have wondered, but they've been too tactful to enquire.

Too tactful?

Why, yes, to be sure. Isn't that a kind of tact? To speak as little as possible of the dead to the bereft?

He had stopped some paces from the gravestone and had turned away from me to pluck a dying leaf from an azalea plant, but I knew that his face, in spite of the changes of age, wore an expression of anger and yet of satisfaction that I had seen so often from the earliest days of my childhood. For adroitly, he had trapped me into revealing for the millionth time my ignorance (he had, seven years ago, called it my willful ignorance) of his grief which, like a precious flower, had under his care become immortal—as fresh, as faultless as on the day she died and I was born. And yet, he liked to coax a canker to its immaculate petals to cherish them the more when he had cleansed them. Just as he was pulling off the limp yellowing leaf from the azalea, gently, so as not to disturb the delicate living tissues of the plant, so he was removing my careless blight from his heart's rose.

He was reluctant to leave the garden and in that hallowed place—for every flower and tree and bush was dedicated like the appointments of an altar—we would not quarrel, not even in low

ered voices and not even in the language so shrewdly civil we had used, on the other occasion, to deceive the servants who might be eavesdropping. It occurred to me, seeing him delay our return to the house by examining the soil about the oleanders and rambling thoughtfully about the lily pond, consuming more than half an hour in an aimless survey of his consecrated grove that if he were able to predict me better, he would like to prolong my stay, for who but I could so often and yet so impotently threaten his exquisite obsession? Whose guilt was so ineradicable? And I wondered if this was why he had written me after so many years a curiosity to know if I *had* become more predictable, and if he could now check me before I had gone too far. He had been careful to name no term for my visit. At any moment, he might say, as he had done before, Of course you may stay as long as you like, but surely you are intelligent enough to see that we can never be at peace with one another.

I have put a new floor in the summerhouse, he said. Perhaps you would like to see it. If I remember rightly, the summerhouse was all you really cared about in my little garden. He smiled beseechingly at me like the great lady deprecating her little house to her poor cousins. Indeed, I had liked the summerhouse and had often played there, for it was the only place in the garden where I was not haunted by my mother's ghost and by the slumbrous fragrance of my father's offerings to her. One day I had marked with brilliant blue paint the diamonds patterned on the floor by the sunlight coming through the lattice work. Now my marks, made with an enamel advertised as indelible, were gone.

We sat down on the circular bench, my father gazing out the doorway in the direction of the gravestone, a slab of marble beneath whose ivory surface a clouded rosiness showed through. He spoke almost to himself, No, of course you wouldn't remember John Stuart. I did not contradict him, though I perfectly recalled his gaunt and sentimental friend who had come, fifteen years before, at the time my mother's skeleton was transferred from the graveyard to the garden. Evening after evening, I heard their low voices behind the closed door of the library. One night, they walked along the terrace below my windows and I heard John Stuart say, What a saint you are! And once, when, at my

father's request, I had set out before them glasses and a decanter of brandy, he said, She is the image of her mother There was a precise moment of silence, and then my father said, I am thinking of hiring a tutor Her Latin is very bad His voice was even and remote with distaste

I noticed this evening at dinner, he said, that your hair seems a little darker I did not miss the satisfaction in his words Anything that made me unlike my mother called forth his secret admiration As always before, I blushed and quickly diverted his attention from my appearance Your new floor is handsome, I said

Oh, yes, he said, starting Yes, it will do very well As he bent over to look at it, a large black bug scuttled across the floor and stopped near his foot I saw him shudder and lift his foot to crush it but he did not A spider,' he said We have a great many of them at this time of year Some are poisonous He continued to gaze at it and in a moment slowly lifted his foot again and brought it down lightly, Not to make a mess, he whispered I heard a brittle cracking and my father said, Oh, what a pity It wasn't a spider, only a harmless beetle

He had not killed it The creature struggled with a frenzied energy and worked itself onto its back, then tossed and labored to right itself, waving weary legs, straightening and flexing them pausing and wildly fluttering them again It gained a little and lay upon its side, shuttered a mangled wing, and helplessly rolled over on its back

It's not dead, I said Hadn't you better kill it?

His smile was mutilated by the moonlight It was at once inquiring and patronizing He said, Why?

I don't know Only perhaps it's suffering

Let me allow you to complete the murder, he said, and as I stood up and started to move towards the dying bug, he added,

I couldn't step on it again myself The shell cracking under my foot gave me a horrible feeling that I was breaking human bones

Then I can't *now*! I cried I returned to my place For some time we remained there, watching the beetle's noiseless fit, it seemed hours later that a sudden darkness passed over the floor

of the summerhouse and my father sprang to his feet with a cry. But immediately himself again, as though he had not uttered it, as though the sound were as unconnected with us as the distant hoot of an owl, he said, You must excuse me. I go to bed early, though I don't sleep. Feel free to stay as long as you like. I can send a lantern out to you.

He lighted a lantern he had taken down from the shelf above the bench and his face, illumined briefly, revealed no more than had his voice, the dismay that had made him cry out.

No, thank you, I said. The moon will come out again. I can see without it anyhow.

I followed him out the door and lay down upon the grass. I leaned on my elbow and watched him pass through the opening in the hedge. His lanterns arc caricatured him as a ghost out of joint, his head was peaked by the phenomenon of the light and in place of arms, two narrow wings listlessly swung while the fattened torso wobbled. The sad light diminished and was absorbed. The moon shone forth again and in its light as I turned and leaned upon the other elbow, I could see the beetle on the floor of the summerhouse still pitching in its morbid dance. I lay back upon the grass and seemed to fall into the depths of the earth with a forcible weariness and closed my eyes and, perhaps for a few minutes, dozed. Then, suddenly confused as one whose dream of last night contradicts or corresponds to today's facts, it occurred to me that the beetle actually was dead and had been from the first and that the changeable moon's ruffling chiaroscuro has misled us. I went into the summerhouse and stooping down, saw that some time since, its life arrested, death had chosen for its final attitude that of a human foetus with curved thorax protected by the folded, tattered wings. I left it in its desolate repose and as I passed through the garden on my way to the house, I shook the lowest branch of the middle mountain ash tree so that in the silence, the crimson fruit, soft as it was, made a faint sound as it fell on the gravestone.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS



The Use of Force

They were new patients to me, all I had was the name, Olson
Please come down as soon as you can, my daughter is very
sick

When I arrived I was met by the mother, a big startled looking
woman, very clean and apologetic who merely said, Is this the
doctor? and let me in In the back, she added You must excuse
us, doctor, we have her in the kitchen where it is warm It is very
damp here sometimes

The child was fully dressed and sitting on her father's lap near
the kitchen table He tried to get up, but I motioned for him not
to bother, took off my overcoat and started to look things over
I could see that they were all very nervous, eyeing me up and down
distrustfully As often, in such cases, they weren't telling me more
than they had to, it was up to me to tell them, that's why they
were spending three dollars on me

The child was fairly eating me up with her cold, steady eyes,
and no expression to her face whatever She did not move and
seemed, inwardly quiet, an unusually attractive little thing, and
as strong as a heifer in appearance But her face was flushed, she
was breathing rapidly, and I realized that she had a high fever
She had magnificent blonde hair, in profusion One of those pic-
ture children often reproduced in advertising leaflets and the
photogravure sections of the Sunday papers

She's had a fever for three days, began the father and we don't
know what it comes from My wife has given her things, you know,
like people do, but it don't do no good And there's been a lot of
sickness around So we tho't you'd better look her over and tell
us what is the matter

As doctors often do I took a trial shot at it as a point of departure Has she had a sore throat?

Both parents answered me together, No No, she says her throat don't hurt her

Does your throat hurt you? added the mother to the child But the little girl's expression didn't change nor did she move her eyes from my face

Have you looked?

I tried to, said the mother, but I couldn't see

As it happens we had been having a number of cases of diphtheria in the school to which this child went during that month and we were all, quite apparently, thinking of that, though no one had as yet spoken of the thing

Well, I said, suppose we take a look at the throat first I smiled in my best professional manner and asking for the child's first name I said, come on, Mathilda, open your mouth and let's take a look at your throat

Nothing doing

Aw, come on, I coaxed, just open your mouth wide and let me take a look Look, I said opening both hands wide, I haven't any thing in my hands Just open up and let me see

Such a nice man, put in the mother Look how kind he is to you Come on, do what he tells you to He won't hurt you

At that I ground my teeth in disgust If only they wouldn't use the word hurt I might be able to get somewhere But I did not allow myself to be hurried or disturbed but speaking quietly and slowly I approached the child again

As I moved my chair a little nearer suddenly with one catlike movement both her hands clawed instinctively for my eyes and she almost reached them too In fact she knocked my glasses flying and they fell, though unbroken, several feet away from me on the kitchen floor

Both the mother and father almost turned themselves inside out in embarrassment and apology You bad girl, said the mother, taking her and shaking her by one arm Look what you've done The nice man

For heaven's sake, I broke in Don't call me a nice man to her I'm here to look at her throat on the chance that she might have

diphtheria and possibly die of it But that's nothing to her Look here, I said to the child, we're going to look at your throat You're old enough to understand what I'm saying Will you open it now by yourself or shall we have to open it for you?

Not a move Even her expression hadn't changed Her breaths however were coming faster and faster Then the battle began I had to do it I had to have a throat culture for her own protection But first I told the parents that it was entirely up to them I explained the danger but said that I would not insist on a throat examination so long as they would take the responsibility

If you don't do what the doctor says you'll have to go to the hospital, the mother admonished her severely

Oh yeah? I had to smile to myself After all, I had already fallen in love with the savage brat, the parents were contemptible to me In the ensuing struggle they grew more and more abject crushed, exhausted while she surely rose to magnificent heights of insane fury of effort bred of her terror of me

The father tried his best and he was a big man but the fact that she was his daughter, his shame at her behavior and his dread of hurting her made him release her just at the critical moment several times when I had almost achieved success, till I wanted to kill him But his dread also that she might have diphtheria made him tell me to go on, go on though he himself was almost fainting while the mother moved back and forth behind us raising and lowering her hands in an agony of apprehension

Put her in front of you on your lap, I ordered, and hold both her wrists

But as soon as he did the child let out a scream Don't, you're hurting me Let go of my hands Let them go I tell you Then she shrieked terrifyingly, hysterically Stop it! Stop it! You're killing me!

Do you think she can stand it, doctor! said the mother

You get out, said the husband to his wife Do you want her to die of diphtheria?

Come on now, hold her, I said

Then I grasped the child's head with my left hand and tried to get the wooden tongue depressor between her teeth She fought,

with clenched teeth, desperately! But now I also had grown furious—at a child I tried to hold myself down but I couldn't I know how to expose a throat for inspection And I did my best When finally I got the wooden spatula behind the last teeth and just the point of it into the mouth cavity, she opened up for an instant but before I could see anything she came down again and gripping the wooden blade between her molars she reduced it to splinters before I could get it out again

Aren't you ashamed, the mother yelled at her Aren't you ashamed to act like that in front of the doctor?

Get me a smooth handled spoon of some sort, I told the mother We're going through with this The child's mouth was already bleeding Her tongue was cut and she was screaming in wild hysterical shrieks Perhaps I should have desisted and come back in an hour or more No doubt it would have been better But I have seen at least two children lying dead in bed of neglect in such cases, and feeling that I must get a diagnosis now or never I went at it again But the worst of it was that I too had got beyond reason I could have torn the child apart in my own fury and enjoyed it It was a pleasure to attack her My face was burning with it

The damned little brat must be protected against her own idiocy, one says to one's self at such times Others must be protected against her It is a social necessity And all these things are true But a blind fury, a feeling of adult shame, bred of a longing for muscular release are the operatives One goes on to the end

In a final unreasoning assault I overpowered the child's neck and jaws I forced the heavy silver spoon back of her teeth and down her throat till she gagged And there it was—both tonsils covered with membrane She had fought valiantly to keep me from knowing her secret She had been hiding that sore throat for three days at least and lying to her parents in order to escape just such an outcome as this

Now truly she *was* furious She had been on the defensive before but now she attacked Tried to get off her father's lap and fly at me while tears of defeat blinded her eyes

FRANZ KAFKA



The Judgment

It was a Sunday morning in the very height of spring Georg Bendemann, a young merchant, was sitting in his own room on the first floor of one of a long row of small, ramshackle houses stretching beside the river which were scarcely distinguishable from each other except in height and coloring. He had just finished a letter to an old friend of his who was now living abroad, had put it into its envelope in a slow and dreamy fashion, and with his elbows propped on the writing table was gazing out of the window at the river, the bridge and the hills on the farther bank with their tender green.

He was thinking about his friend, who had actually run away to Russia some years before being dissatisfied with his prospects at home. Now he was carrying on a business in St. Petersburg, which had flourished to begin with but had long been going downhill, as he always complained on his increasingly rare visits. So he was wearing himself out to no purpose in a foreign country, the unfamiliar full beard he wore did not quite conceal the face Georg had known so well since childhood, and his skin was growing so yellow as to indicate some latent disease. By his own account he had no regular connection with the colony of his fellow countrymen out there and almost no social intercourse with Russian families, so that he was resigning himself to becoming a permanent bachelor.

What could one write to such a man, who had obviously run off the rails, a man one could be sorry for but could not help. Should one advise him to come home, to transplant himself and take up his old friendships again—there was nothing to hinder him—and in general to rely on the help of his friends? But that was as good

as telling him, and the more kindly the more offensively, that all his efforts hitherto had miscarried, that he should finally give up, come back home, and be gaped at by everyone as a returned prodigal, that only his friends knew what was what and that he himself was just a big child who should do what his successful and home keeping friends prescribed. And was it certain, besides, that all the pain one would have to inflict on him would achieve its object? Perhaps it would not even be possible to get him to come home at all—he said himself that he was now out of touch with commerce in his native country—and then he would still be left an alien in a foreign land embittered by his friends' advice and more than ever estranged from them. But if he did follow their advice and then didn't fit in at home—not out of malice, of course, but through force of circumstances—couldn't get on with his friends or without them, felt humiliated, couldn't be said to have either friends or a country of his own any longer, wouldn't it have been better for him to stay abroad just as he was? Taking all this into account, how could one be sure that he would make a success of life at home?

For such reasons, supposing one wanted to keep up correspondence with him, one could not send him any real news such as could frankly be told to the most distant acquaintance. It was more than three years since his last visit, and for this he offered the lame excuse that the political situation in Russia was too uncertain, which apparently would not permit even the briefest absence of a small business man while it allowed hundreds of thousands of Russians to travel peacefully abroad. But during these three years Georg's own position in life had changed a lot. Two years ago his mother had died, since when he and his father had shared the household together, and his friend had of course been informed of that and had expressed his sympathy in a letter phrased so dryly that the grief caused by such an event, one had to conclude, could not be realized in a distant country. Since that time, however, Georg had applied himself with greater determination to the business as well as to everything else.

Perhaps during his mother's lifetime his father's insistence on having everything his own way in the business had hindered him from developing any real activity of his own, perhaps since her

death his father had become less aggressive, although newspaper, in active in the business perhaps it was mostly due to an run of good fortune—which was very probable indeed—ten on this rate during those two years the business had developed in† by the unexpected way, the staff had had to be doubled, the turnover was five times as great, no doubt about it, farther progress lay ‡s of ahead ne

But Georg's friend had no inkling of this improvement. In earlier years, perhaps for the last time in that letter of condolence, he had tried to persuade Georg to emigrate to Russia and had enlarged upon the prospects of success for precisely Georg's branch of trade. The figures quoted were microscopic by comparison with the range of Georg's present operations. Yet he shrank from letting his friend know about his business success, and if he were to do it now retrospectively that certainly would look peculiar.

So Georg confined himself to giving his friend unimportant items of gossip such as rise at random in the memory when one is idly thinking things over on a quiet Sunday. All he desired was to leave undisturbed the idea of the home town which his friend must have built up to his own content during the long interval. And so it happened to Georg that three times in three fairly widely separated letters he had told his friend about the engagement of an unimportant man to an equally unimportant girl, until indeed, quite contrary to his intentions, his friend began to show some interest in this notable event.

Yet Georg preferred to write about things like these rather than to confess that he himself had got engaged a month ago to a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family. He often discussed this friend of his with his fiancée and the peculiar relationship that had developed between them in their correspondence. So he won't be coming to our wedding, said she, and yet I have a right to get to know all your friends. I don't want to trouble him, answered Georg. Don't misunderstand me, he would probably come, at least I think so, but he would feel that his hand had been forced and he would be hurt, perhaps he would envy me and certainly he'd be discontented and without being able to do anything about his discontent he'd have to go away again alone. Alone—do you know what that means? Yes, but may he not hear

about our wedding in some other fashion? 'I can't prevent that, of course, but it's unlikely, considering the way he lives. Since your friends are like that, Georg, you shouldn't ever have got engaged at all. Well, we're both to blame for that, but I wouldn't have it any other way now. And when, breathing quickly under his kisses, she still brought out: All the same, I do feel upset, he thought it could not really involve him in trouble were he to send the news to his friend. 'That's the kind of man I am and he'll just have to take me as I am,' he said to himself. I can't cut myself to another pattern that might make a more suitable friend for him.

And in fact he did inform his friend, in the long letter he had been writing that Sunday morning, about his engagement, with these words: I have saved my best news to the end. I have got engaged to a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family, who only came to live here a long time after you went away, so that you're hardly likely to know her. There will be time to tell you more about her later, for today let me just say that I am very happy and as between you and me the only difference in our relationship is that instead of a quite ordinary kind of friend you will now have in me a happy friend. Besides that, you will acquire in my fiancée, who sends her warm greetings and will soon write you herself, a genuine friend of the opposite sex, which is not without importance to a bachelor. I know that there are many reasons why you can't come to see us, but would not my wedding be precisely the right occasion for giving all obstacles the go-by? Still, however that may be, do just as seems good to you without regarding any interests but your own.

With this letter in his hand Georg had been sitting a long time at the writing table, his face turned towards the window. He had barely acknowledged, with an absent smile, a greeting waved to him from the street by a passing acquaintance.

At last he put the letter in his pocket and went out of his room across a small lobby into his father's room, which he had not entered for months. There was in fact no need for him to enter it, since he saw his father daily at business and they took their midday meal together at an eating house, in the evening, it was true, each did as he pleased, yet even then, unless Georg—as mostly happened—went out with friends or, more recently, visited his

fiancée, they always sat for a while, each with his newspaper, in their common sitting room

It surprised Georg how dark his father's room was even on this sunny morning. So it was overshadowed as much as that by the high wall on the other side of the narrow courtyard. His father was sitting by the window in a corner hung with various mementoes of Georg's dead mother, reading a newspaper which he held to one side before his eyes in an attempt to overcome a defect of vision. On the table stood the remains of his breakfast, not much of which seemed to have been eaten.

Ah, Georg said his father, rising at once to meet him. His heavy dressing gown swung open as he walked and the skirts of it fluttered round him — My father is still a giant of a man, said Georg to himself.

It's unbearably dark here, he said aloud.

Yes, it's dark enough, answered his father.

And you've shut the window, too?

I prefer it like that.

Well, it's quite warm outside, said Georg, as if continuing his previous remark, and sat down.

His father cleared away the breakfast dishes and set them on a chest.

I really only wanted to tell you, went on Georg, who had been vacantly following the old man's movements, "that I am now sending the news of my engagement to St. Petersburg. He drew the letter a little way from his pocket and let it drop back again.

To St. Petersburg? asked his father.

To my friend there, said Georg, trying to meet his father's eye — In business hours he's quite different, he was thinking. How solidly he sits here with his arms crossed.

Oh yes. To your friend, said his father, with peculiar emphasis.

Well, you know, father, that I wanted not to tell him about my engagement at first. Out of consideration for him, that was the only reason. You know yourself he's a difficult man. I said to myself that someone else might tell him about my engagement, although he's such a solitary creature that that was hardly likely — I couldn't prevent that — but I wasn't ever going to tell him myself.

And now you've changed your mind? asked his father, laying

his enormous newspaper on the window sill and on top of it his spectacles, which he covered with one hand

Yes, I've been thinking it over If he's a good friend of mine, I said to myself, my being happily engaged should make him happy too And so I wouldn't put off telling him any longer But before I posted the letter I wanted to let you know

Georg, said his father, lengthening his toothless mouth, listen to me! You've come to me about this business, to talk it over with me No doubt that does you honor But it's nothing, it's worse than nothing, if you don't tell me the whole truth I don't want to stir up matters that shouldn't be mentioned here Since the death of our dear mother certain things have been done that aren't right Maybe the time will come for mentioning them, and maybe sooner than we think There's many a thing in the business I'm not aware of, maybe it's not done behind my back—I'm not going to say that it's done behind my back—I'm not equal to things any longer, my memory's failing, I haven't an eye for so many things any longer That's the course of nature in the first place, and in the second place the death of our dear mother hit me harder than it did you —But since we're talking about it, about this letter, I beg you, Georg, don't deceive me It's a trivial affair, it's hardly worth mentioning, so don't deceive me Do you really have this friend in St Petersburg?

Georg rose in embarrassment 'Never mind my friends A thousand friends wouldn't make up to me for my father Do you know what I think? You're not taking enough care of yourself But old age must be taken care of I can't do without you in the business, you know that very well, but if the business is going to undermine your health, I'm ready to close it down tomorrow forever And that won't do We'll have to make a change in your way of living But a radical change You sit here in the dark, and in the sitting room you would have plenty of light You just take a bite of breakfast instead of properly keeping up your strength You sit by a closed window, and the air would be so good for you No, Father! I'll get the doctor to come, and we'll follow his orders We'll change your room, you can move into the front room and I'll move in here You won't notice the change, all your things will be moved with you But there's time for all that later, I'll put

you to bed now for a little, I'm sure you need to rest. Come, I'll help you to take off your things, you'll see I can do it. Or if you would rather go into the front room at once, you can lie down in my bed for the present. That would be the most sensible thing.

Georg stood close beside his father, who had let his head with its unkempt white hair sink on his chest.

Georg, said his father in a low voice, without moving.

Georg knelt down at once beside his father. In the old man's weary face he saw the pupils, over large, fixedly looking at him from the corners of the eyes.

You have a friend in St. Petersburg. You've always been a leg-puller and you haven't even shrunk from pulling my leg. How could you have a friend out there! I can't believe it.

Just think back a bit, Father, said Georg, lifting his father from the chair and slipping off his dressing gown as he stood feebly enough, it'll soon be three years since my friend came to see us last. I remember that you used not to like him very much. At least twice I kept you from seeing him, although he was actually sitting with me in my room. I could quite well understand your dislike of him, my friend has his peculiarities. But then, later, you got on with him very well. I was proud because you listened to him and nodded and asked him questions. If you think back you're bound to remember. He used to tell us the most incredible stories of the Russian Revolution. For instance, when he was on a business trip to Kiev and ran into a riot, and saw a priest on a balcony who cut a broad cross in blood on the palm of his hand and held the hand up and appealed to the mob. You've told that story yourself once or twice since.

Meanwhile Georg had succeeded in lowering his father down again and carefully taking off the woollen drawers he wore over his linen underpants and his socks. The not particularly clean appearance of this underwear made him reproach himself for having been neglectful. It should have certainly been his duty to see that his father had clean changes of underwear. He had not yet explicitly discussed with his bride to be what arrangements should be made for his father in the future, for they had both of them silently taken it for granted that the old man would go on living alone in the old house. But now he made a quick, firm decision to

take him into his own future establishment. It almost looked, on closer inspection, as if the care he meant to lavish there on his father might come too late.

He carried his father to bed in his arms. It gave him a dreadful feeling to notice that while he took the few steps towards the bed the old man on his breast was playing with his watch chain. He could not lay him down on the bed for a moment, so firmly did he hang on to the watch chain.

But as soon as he was laid in bed, all seemed well. He covered himself up and even drew the blankets farther than usual over his shoulders. He looked up at Georg with a not unfriendly eye.

'You begin to remember my friend, don't you?' asked Georg, giving him an encouraging nod.

'Am I well covered up now?' asked his father, as if he were not able to see whether his feet were properly tucked in or not.

'So you find it snug in bed already,' said Georg, and tucked the blankets more closely round him.

'Am I well covered up?' asked the father once more, seeming to be strangely intent upon the answer.

'Don't worry, you're well covered up.'

'No!' cried his father, cutting short the answer, and threw the blankets off with a strength that sent them all flying in a moment and sprang erect in bed. Only one hand lightly touched the ceiling to steady him.

'You wanted to cover me up, I know, my young sprig, but I'm far from being covered up yet. And even if this is the last strength I have, it's enough for you, too much for you. Of course I know your friend. He would have been a son after my own heart. That's why you've been playing him false all these years. Why else? Do you think I haven't been sorry for him? And that's why you had to lock yourself up in your office—the Chief is busy, mustn't be disturbed—just so that you could write your lying little letters to Russia. But thank goodness a father doesn't need to be taught how to see through his son. And now that you thought you'd got him down, so far down that you could set your bottom on him and sit on him and he wouldn't move, then my fine son makes up his mind to get married.'

Georg stared at the bogey conjured up by his father. His friend

in St Petersburg whom his father suddenly knew too well, touched his imagination as never before. Lost in the vastness of Russia he saw him. At the door of an empty, plundered warehouse he saw him. Among the wreckage of his showcases, the slashed remnants of his wares, the falling gas brackets, he was just standing up. Why did he have to go so far away!

But attend to me! cried his father, and Georg, almost distracted, ran towards the bed to take everything in, yet came to a stop halfway.

Because she lifted up her skirts, his father began to flute, 'because she lifted her skirts like this, the nasty creature, and mimicking her he lifted his shirt so high that one could see the scar on his thigh from his war wound, 'because she lifted her skirts like this and this you made up to her, and in order to make free with her undisturbed you have disgraced your mother's memory, betrayed your friend and stuck your father into bed so that he can't move. But he can move, or can't he?

And he stood up quite unsupported and kicked his legs out. His insight made him radiant.

Georg shrank into a corner, as far away from his father as possible. A long time ago he had firmly made up his mind to watch closely every least movement so that he should not be surprised by any indirect attack, a pounce from behind or above. At this moment he recalled this long forgotten resolve and forgot it again, like a man drawing a short thread through the eye of a needle.

But your friend hasn't been betrayed after all! cried his father, emphasizing the point with stabs of his forefinger. I've been representing him here on the spot.

You comedian! Georg could not resist the retort, realized at once the harm done and, his eyes starting in his head, bit his tongue back only too late, till the pain made his knees give.

Yes, of course I've been playing a comedy! A comedy! that's a good expression! What other comfort was left to a poor old widower? Tell me—and while you're answering me be you still my living son—what else was left to me, in my back room, plagued by a disloyal staff, old to the marrow of my bones? And my son strutting through the world finishing off deals that I had prepared for him, bursting with triumphant glee and stalking away

from his father with the closed face of a respectable business man! Do you think I didn't love you, I, from whom you are sprung?

Now he'll lean forward, thought Georg, what if he topples and smashes himself! These words went hissing through his mind

His father leaned forward but did not topple. Since Georg did not come any nearer, as he had expected, he straightened himself again

Stay where you are, I don't need you! You think you have strength enough to come over here and that you're only hanging back of your own accord. Don't be too sure! I am still much the stronger of us two. All by myself I might have had to give way, but your mother has given me so much of her strength that I've established a fine connection with your friend and I have your customers here in my pocket!

He has pockets even in his shirt! said Georg to himself, and believed that with this remark he could make him an impossible figure for all the world. Only for a moment did he think so, since he kept on forgetting everything

Just take your bride on your arm and try getting in my way! I'll sweep her from your very side, you don't know how!

Georg made a grimace of disbelief. His father only nodded, confirming the truth of his words, towards Georg's corner

How you amused me today, coming to ask me if you should tell your friend about your engagement. He knows it already, you stupid boy, he knows it all! I've been writing to him, for you forgot to take my writing things away from me. That's why he hasn't been here for years, he knows everything a hundred times better than you do yourself, in his left hand he crumples your letters unopened while in his right hand he holds up my letters to read through!

In his enthusiasm he waved his arm over his head. He knows everything a thousand times better! he cried

'Ten thousand times!' said Georg to make fun of his father, but in his very mouth the words turned into deadly earnest

For years I've been waiting for you to come with some such question! Do you think I concern myself with anything else? Do you think I read my newspapers? Look! and he threw Georg a

newspaper sheet which he had somehow taken to bed with him
An old newspaper, with a name entirely unknown to Georg

How long a time you've taken to grow up! Your mother had to die, she couldn't see the happy day, your friend is going to pieces in Russia, even three years ago he was yellow enough to be thrown away and as for me, you see what condition I'm in You have eyes in your head for that!

So you've been lying in wait for me! cried Georg

His father said pityingly, in an offhand manner I suppose you wanted to say that sooner But now it doesn't matter And in a louder voice So now you know what else there was in the world besides yourself, till now you've known only about yourself! An innocent child, yes, that you were, truly, but still more truly have you been a devilish human being!—And therefore take note I sentence you now to death by drowning!

Georg felt himself urged from the room, the crash with which his father fell on the bed behind him was still in his ears as he fled On the staircase, which he rushed down as if its steps were an inclined plane, he ran into his charwoman on her way up to do the morning cleaning of the room Jesus! she cried and covered her face with her apron, but he was already gone Out of the front door he rushed across the roadway, driven towards the water Already he was grasping at the railings as a starving man clutches food He swung himself over, like the distinguished gymnast he had once been in his youth, to his parents' pride With weakening grip he was still holding on when he spied between the railings a motor bus coming which would easily cover the noise of his fall called in a low voice 'Dear parents, I have always loved you, all the same, and let himself drop

At this moment an unending stream of traffic was just going over the bridge

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY



The Grand Inquisitor *

Do you know, Alyosha—don't laugh! I made a poem about a year ago. If you can waste another ten minutes on me, I'll tell it to you.

You wrote a poem?

Oh, no, I didn't write it, laughed Ivan, and I've never written two lines of poetry in my life. But I made up this poem in prose and I remembered it. I was carried away when I made it up. You will be my first reader—that is, listener. Why should an author forego even one listener? smiled Ivan. Shall I tell it to you?

'I am all attention,' said Alyosha.

My poem is called *The Grand Inquisitor*, it's a ridiculous thing, but I want to tell it to you.

Fifteen centuries have passed since He promised to come in His glory, fifteen centuries since His prophet wrote, Behold, I come quickly, Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father—as He Himself predicted on earth. But humanity awaits him with the same faith and with the same love. Oh, with greater faith for it is fifteen centuries since man has ceased to see signs from Heaven.

*No signs from Heaven come to day
To add to what the heart doth say*

There was nothing left but faith in what the heart doth say. It is true there were many miracles in those days. There were saints.

* This story is taken from Chapters 4 and 5 of Book V of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, with minor omissions and some reparagraphing.

who performed miraculous cures, some holy people, according to their biographies were visited by the Queen of Heaven herself But the devil did not slumber, and doubts were already arising among men of the truth of these miracles And just then there appeared in the north of Germany a terrible new heresy A huge star like to a torch (that is, to a church) fell on the sources of the waters and they became bitter These heretics began blasphemously denying miracles But those who remained faithful were all the more ardent in their faith The tears of humanity rose up to Him as before, awaited His coming, loved Him, hoped for Him, yearned to suffer and die for Him as before And so many ages mankind had prayed with faith and fervour, O Lord our God, hasten Thy coming

And behold He deigned to appear for a moment to the people, to the tortured, suffering people, sunk in iniquity but loving Him like children My story is laid in Spain, in Seville, in the most terrible time of the Inquisition, when fires were lighted every day to the glory of God and in the splendid *auto da fe* the wicked heretics were burnt Oh, of course, this was not the coming in which He will appear according to His promise at the end of time in all His heavenly glory, and which will be sudden as lightning flashing from east to west No, He visited His children only for a moment, and there where the flames were crackling round the heretics In His infinite mercy He came once more among men in that human shape in which He walked among men for three years fifteen centuries ago He came down to the hot pavement of the southern town in which on the day before almost a hundred heretics had *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, been burnt by the cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor in a magnificent *auto da fe*, in the presence of the king, the court, the knights, the cardinals the most charming ladies of the court and the whole population of Seville

He came softly, unobserved, and yet strange to say, every one recognised Him That might be one of the best passages in the poem I mean, why they recognised Him The people are irresistibly drawn to Him, they surround Him, they flock about Him, follow Him He moves silently in their midst with a gentle

smile of infinite compassion The sun of love burns in His heart, light and power shine from His eyes, and their radiance shed on the people, stirs their hearts with responsive love He holds out His hands to them, blesses them, and a healing virtue comes from contact with Him, even with His garments An old man in the crowd, blind from childhood, cries out, O Lord, heal me and I shall see Thee! and, as it were, scales fall from his eyes and the blind man sees Him The crowd weeps and kisses the earth under His feet Children throw flowers before Him, sing, and cry hosannah It is He—it is He! all repeat It must be He, it can be no one but Him!

“He stops at the steps of the Seville cathedral at the moment when the weeping mourners are bringing in a little open white coffin In it lies a child of seven, the only daughter of a prominent citizen The dead child lies hidden in flowers He will raise your child, the crowd shouts to the weeping mother The priest, coming to meet the coffin, looks perplexed, and frowns, but the mother of the dead child throws herself at His feet with a wail If it is Thou, raise my child! she cries, holding out her hands to Him The procession halts, the coffin is laid on the steps at His feet He looks with compassion, and His lips once more softly pronounce Maiden, arise! and the maiden arises The little girl sits up in the coffin and looks round, smiling with wide open wondering eyes, holding a bunch of white roses they had put in her hand

“There are cries, sobs, confusion among the people, and at that moment the cardinal himself, the Grand Inquisitor, passes by the cathedral He is an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes, in which there is still a gleam of light He is not dressed in his gorgeous cardinal's robes, as he was the day before, when he was burning the enemies of the Roman Church—at that moment he was wearing his coarse, old, monk's cassock At a distance behind him come his gloomy assistants and slaves and the holy guard He stops at the sight of the crowd and watches it from a distance He sees everything, he sees them set the coffin down at His feet, sees the child rise up, and his face darkens He knits his thick grey brows and his eyes gleam with a sinister fire He holds out his finger and bids the

guards take Him And such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him that the crowd immediately make way for the guards, and in the midst of deathlike silence they lay hands on Him and lead Him away The crowd instantly bows down to the earth, like one man, before the old inquisitor He blesses the people in silence and passes on

The guards lead their prisoner to the close, gloomy vaulted prison in the ancient palace of the Holy Inquisition and shut Him in it The day passes and is followed by the dark, burning breathless night of Seville The air is fragrant with laurel and lemon In the pitch darkness the iron door of the prison is suddenly opened and the Grand Inquisitor himself comes in with a light in his hand He is alone, the door is closed at once behind him He stands in the doorway and for a minute or two gazes into His face At last he goes up slowly, sets the light on the table and speaks

Is it Thou? Thou? but receiving no answer, he adds at once, Don't answer be silent What canst Thou say, indeed? I know too well what Thou wouldst say And Thou hast no right to add anything to what Thou hadst said of old Why, then, art Thou come to hinder us? For Thou hast come to hinder us, and Thou knowest that But dost Thou know what will be to-morrow? I know not who Thou art and care not to know whether it is Thou or only a semblance of Him, but to-morrow I shall condemn Thee and burn Thee at the stake as the worst of heretics And the very people who have to-day kissed Thy feet, to-morrow at the faintest sign from me will rush to heap up the embers of Thy fire Knowest Thou that? Yes, maybe Thou knowest it, he added with thoughtful penetration, never for a moment taking his eyes off the Prisoner

I don't quite understand, Ivan What does it mean? Alyosha, who had been listening in silence, said with a smile Is it simply a wild fantasy, or a mistake on the part of the old man—some impossible *qui pro quo*?

Take it as the last said Ivan, laughing, if you are so corrupted by modern realism and can't stand anything fantastic If you like it to be a case of mistaken identity, let it be so It is true,

he went on, laughing, the old man was ninety, and he might well be crazy over his set idea. He might have been struck by the appearance of the Prisoner. It might, in fact, be simply his ravings, the delusion of an old man of ninety, over excited by the *auto da fe* of a hundred heretics the day before. But does it matter to us after all whether it was a mistake of identity or a wild fantasy? All that matters is that the old man should speak out, should speak openly of what he has thought in silence for ninety years.

‘And the Prisoner too is silent? Does He look at him and not say a word?’

That’s inevitable in any case, Ivan laughed again. The old man has told Him. He hasn’t the right to add anything to what He has said of old. One may say it is the most fundamental feature of Roman Catholicism, in my opinion at least. ‘All has been given by Thee to the Pope, they say, and all therefore, is still in the Pope’s hands and there is no need for Thee to come now at all. Thou must not meddle for the time, at least. That’s how they speak and write too—the Jesuits, at any rate. I have read it myself in the works of their theologians.

Hast Thou the right to reveal to us one of the mysteries of that world from which Thou hast come? my old man asks Him, and answers the question for Him. No. Thou hast not that Thou mayest not add to what has been said of old and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou didst exalt when Thou wast on earth. Whatsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men’s freedom of faith, for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago. Didst Thou not often say then, I will make you free? But now Thou hast seen these free men, the old man adds suddenly, with a pensive smile. ‘Yes, we’ve paid dearly for it, he goes on, looking sternly at Him, but at last we have completed that work in Thy name. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestling with Thy freedom, but now it is ended and over for good. Dost Thou not believe that it’s over for good? Thou lookest meekly at me and deignest not even to be wroth with me. But let me tell Thee that now, to day, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought

their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet But that has been our doing Was this what Thou didst? Was this Thy freedom?

I don't understand again, Alyosha broke in Is he ironical, is he jesting?

Not a bit of it! He claims it as a merit for himself and his Church that at last they have vanquished freedom and have done so to make men happy For now (he is speaking of the Inquisition, of course) for the first time it has become possible to think of the happiness of men Man was created a rebel and how can rebels be happy? Thou wast warned, he says to Him Thou hast had no lack of admonitions and warnings, but Thou didst not listen to those warnings, Thou didst reject the only way by which men might be made happy But, fortunately, departing Thou didst hand on the work to us Thou hast promised, Thou hast established by Thy word, Thou hast given to us the right to bind and to unbind, and now, of course, Thou canst not think of taking it away Why, then hast Thou come to hinder us?

And what's the meaning of no lack of admonitions and warnings? asked Alyosha

Why, that's the chief part of what the old man must say

'The wise and dread spirit, the spirit of self destruction and non existence, the old man goes on, the great spirit talked with Thee in the wilderness, and we are told in the books that he tempted Thee Is that so? And could anything truer be said than what he revealed to Thee in three questions and what Thou didst reject, and what in the books is called the temptation? And yet if there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations The statement of those three questions was itself the miracle If it were possible to imagine simply for the sake of argument that those three questions of the dread spirit had perished utterly from the books, and that we had to restore them and to invent them anew and to do so had gathered together all the wise men of the earth—rulers, chief priests learned men, philosophers, poets—and had set them the task to invent three questions, such as would not only fit the occasion, but express in three words, three human phrases,

the whole future history of the world and of humanity—dost Thou believe that all the wisdom of the earth united could have invented anything in depth and force equal to the three questions which were actually put to Thee then by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement, we can see that we have here to do not with the fleeting human intelligence, but with the absolute and eternal. For in those three questions the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole, and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. At the time it could not be so clear, since the future was unknown, but now that fifteen hundred years have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so justly divined and foretold, and has been so truly fulfilled, that nothing can be added to them or taken from them.

Judge Thyself who was right—Thou or he who questioned Thee then? Remember the first question, its meaning, in other words, was this: Thou wouldst go into the world, and art going with empty hands, with some promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and their natural unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread—for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom. But seest Thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after Thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though for ever trembling, lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread. But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom and didst reject the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth, if obedience is bought with bread? Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee, and all will follow him, crying: Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from heaven! Dost Thou know that the ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin, there is only hunger? Feed men, and then ask of them virtue! that's what they'll write on the banner, which they will raise against Thee, and with which they will destroy Thy temple.

Where Thy temple stood will rise a new building, the terrible tower of Babel will be built again, and though, like the one of old, it will not be finished yet Thou mightest have prevented that new tower and have cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years, for they will come back to us after a thousand years of agony with their tower. They will seek us again, hidden under ground in the catacombs, for we shall be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us and cry to us, Feed us, for those who have promised us fire from heaven haven't given it! And then we shall finish building their tower, for he finishes the building who feeds them. And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, Make us your slaves, but feed us. They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them! They will be convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious. Thou didst promise them the bread of Heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever sinful and ignoble race of man? And if for the sake of the bread of Heaven thousands and tens of thousands shall follow Thee what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly? Or dost Thou care only for the tens of thousands of the great and strong, while the millions, numerous as the sands of the sea who are weak but love Thee must exist only for the sake of the great and strong? No, we care for the weak too. They are sinful and rebellious but in the end they too will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them—so awful it will seem to them to be free. But we shall tell them that we are Thy servants and rule them in Thy name. We shall deceive them again, for we will not let Thee come to us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie.

‘ This is the significance of the first question in the wilderness, and this is what Thou hast rejected for the sake of that freedom which Thou hast exalted above everything. Yet in this question lies hid the great secret of this world. Choosing bread, Thou wouldst have satisfied the universal and everlasting craving of humanity—to find some one to worship. So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find some one to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship, what is essential is that all may be *together* in it.

This craving for *community* of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they’ve slain each other with the sword. They have set up gods and challenged one another, Put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods! And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth, they will fall down before idols just the same. Thou didst know, Thou couldst not but have known, this fundamental secret of human nature, but Thou didst reject the one infallible banner which was offered Thee to make all men bow down to Thee alone—the banner of earthly bread, and Thou hast rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven. Behold what Thou didst further. And all again in the name of freedom! I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find some one quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom. In bread there was offered Thee an invincible banner, give bread, and man will worship Thee, for nothing is more certain than bread.

“ But if some one else gains possession of his conscience—oh! then he will cast away Thy bread and follow after him who has ensnared his conscience. In that Thou wast right. For the secret of man’s being is not only to live but to have something to live

for Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance That is true But what happened? Instead of taking men's freedom from them, Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering And behold, instead of giving a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest for ever, Thou didst choose all that is exceptional vague and enigmatic, Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond the strength of men, acting as though Thou didst not love them at all—Thou who didst come to give Thy life for them! Instead of taking possession of men's freedom, Thou didst increase it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its sufferings for ever Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow Thee freely, enticed and taken captive by Thee In place of the rigid ancient law, man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide But didst Thou not know he would at last reject even Thy image and Thy truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in Thee for they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than Thou hast caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems

So that, in truth, Thou didst Thyself lay the foundation for the destruction of Thy kingdom and no one is more to blame for it Yet what was offered Thee? There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold captive for ever the conscience of these impotent rebels for their happiness—those forces are miracle, mystery and authority Thou hast rejected all three and hast set the example for doing so When the wise and dread spirit set Thee on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Thee, If Thou wouldst know whether Thou art the Son of God then cast Thyself down, for it is written the angels shall hold him up lest he fall and bruise himself, and Thou shalt know then whether Thou art

the Son of God and shalt prove then how great is Thy faith in Thy Father But Thou didst refuse and wouldst not cast Thyself down

Oh! of course, Thou didst proudly and well, like God, but the weak, unruly race of men, are they gods? Oh, Thou didst know then that in taking one step, in making one movement to cast Thyself down, Thou wouldst be tempting God and have lost all Thy faith in Him, and wouldst have been dashed to pieces against that earth which Thou didst come to save And the wise spirit that tempted Thee would have rejoiced But I ask again, are there many like Thee? And couldst Thou believe for one moment that men, too, could face such a temptation? Is the nature of men such, that they can reject miracle, and at the great moments of their life, the moments of their deepest, most agonising spiritual difficulties, cling only to the free verdict of the heart? Oh, Thou didst know that Thy deed would be recorded in books, would be handed down to remote times and the utmost ends of the earth, and Thou didst hope that man, following Thee, would cling to God and not ask for a miracle But Thou didst not know that when man rejects miracle he rejects God too, for man seeks not so much God as the miraculous And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own for himself, and will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft, though he might be a hundred times over a rebel, heretic and infidel Thou didst not come down from the Cross when they shouted to Thee, mocking and reviling Thee, Come down from the cross and we will believe that Thou art He Thou didst not come down for again Thou wouldst not enslave man by a miracle, and didst crave faith given freely, not based on miracle Thou didst crave for free love and not the base raptures of the slave before the might that has overawed him for ever

But Thou didst think too highly of men therein, for they are slaves, of course, though rebellious by nature Look round and judge, fifteen centuries have passed, look upon them Whom hast Thou raised up to Thyself? I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than Thou hast believed him! Can he, can he do what Thou didst? By showing him so much respect Thou didst, as it were, cease to feel for him, for Thou didst ask far too much from

him—Thou who hast loved him more than Thyself! Respecting him less, Thou wouldst have asked less of him That would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter He is weak and vile What though he is everywhere now rebelling against our power, and proud of his rebellion? It is the pride of a child and a schoolboy They are little children noting and barring out the teacher at school But their childish delight will end, it will cost them dear They will cast down temples and diench the earth with blood But they will see at last, the foolish children, that though they are rebels, they are impotent rebels, unable to keep up their own rebellion Bathed in their foolish tears, they will recognise at last that He who created them rebels must have meant to mock at them They will say this in despair, and their utterance will be a blasphemy which will make them more unhappy still, for man's nature cannot bear blasphemy, and in the end always avenges it on itself And so unrest confusion and unhappiness—that is the present lot of man after Thou didst bear so much for their freedom! Thy great prophet tells in vision and in image, that he saw all those who took part in the first resurrection and that there were of each tribe twelve thousand But if there were so many of them they must have been not men but gods They had borne Thy cross, they had endured scores of years in the barren, hungry wilderness, living upon locusts and roots—and Thou mayest indeed point with pride at those children of freedom, of free love, of free and splendid sacrifice for Thy name But remember that they were only some thousands, and what of the rest?

And how are the other weak ones to blame, because they could not endure what the strong have endured? How is the weak soul to blame that it is unable to receive such terrible gifts? Canst Thou have simply come to the elect and for the elect? But if so, it is a mystery and we cannot understand it And if it is a mystery we too have a right to preach a mystery, and to teach them that it's not the free judgment of their hearts, not love that matters, but a mystery which they must follow blindly, even against their conscience So we have done We have corrected Thy work and have founded it upon *miracle*, *mystery* and *authority* And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep, and

that the terrible gift that had brought them such suffering, was, at last, lifted from their hearts. Were we right teaching them this? Speak! Did we not love mankind so meekly acknowledging their feebleness, lovingly lightening their burden, and permitting their weak nature even sin with our sanction? Why hast Thou come now to hinder us? And why dost Thou look silently and searchingly at me with Thy mild eyes? Be angry. I don't want Thy love, for I love Thee not. And what use is it for me to hide anything from Thee? Don't I know to Whom I am speaking? All that I can say is known to Thee already. And is it for me to conceal from Thee our mystery? Perhaps it is Thy will to hear it from my lips. Listen then. We are not working with Thee, but with *him*—that is our mystery. It's long—eight centuries—since we have been on *his* side and not on Thine. Just eight centuries ago, we took from him what Thou didst reject with scorn, that last gift he offered Thee, showing Thee all the kingdoms of the earth. We took from him Rome and the sword of Cæsar, and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth, though hitherto we have not been able to complete our work. But whose fault is that? Oh, the work is only beginning, but it has begun. It has long to await completion and the earth has yet much to suffer, but we shall triumph and shall be Cæsars, and then we shall plan the universal happiness of man. But Thou mightest have taken even then the sword of Cæsar. Why didst Thou reject that last gift? Hadst Thou accepted that last counsel of the mighty spirit, Thou wouldst have accomplished all that man seeks on earth—that is, some one to worship, some one to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men.

Mankind as a whole has always striven to organise a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more highly they were developed the more unhappy they were for they felt more acutely than other people the craving for world wide union. The great conquerors, Timours and Ghenghis Khans, whirled like hurricanes over the face of the earth striving to subdue its people, and they too were but the unconscious expression of the same craving for universal

unity Hadst Thou taken the world and Cæsar's purple, Thou wouldst have founded the universal state and have given universal peace For who can rule men if not he who holds their conscience and their bread in his hands?

We have taken the sword of Cæsar, and in taking it, of course have rejected Thee and followed *him* Oh ages are yet to come of the confusion of free thought of their science and cannibalism For having begun to build their tower of Babel with out us, they will end, of course, with cannibalism But then the beast will crawl to us and lick our feet and spatter them with tears of blood And we shall sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written, 'Mystery' But then, and only then, the reign of peace and happiness will come for men Thou art proud of Thine elect, but Thou hast only the elect, while we give rest to all And besides, how many of those elect, those mighty ones who could become elect have grown weary waiting for Thee, and have transferred and will transfer the powers of their spirit and the warmth of their heart to the other camp, and end by raising their *free* banner against Thee Thou didst Thyself lift up that banner But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us And shall we be right or shall we be lying? They will be convinced that we are right for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them Freedom, free thought and science, will lead them into such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some of them the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us Yes, you were right, you alone possess His mystery, and we come back to you, save us from ourselves!

Receiving bread from us, they will see clearly that we take the bread made by their hands from them, to give it to them, without any miracle They will see that we do not change the stones to bread, but in truth they will be more thankful for taking it from our hands than for the bread itself! For they will remember

only too well that in old days, without our help, even the bread they made turned to stones in their hands while since they have come back to us, the very stones have turned to bread in their hands Too, too well they know the value of complete submission! And until men know that, they will be unhappy Who is most to blame for their not knowing it, speak? Who scattered the flock and sent it astray on unknown paths? But the flock will come together again and will submit once more, and then it will be once for all Then we shall give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature

Oh, we shall persuade them at last not to be proud, for Thou didst lift them up and thereby taught them to be proud We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever, that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions They will tremble impotently before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass to laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish song Yes, we shall set them to work, but in their leisure hours we shall make their life like a child's game, with children's songs and innocent dance Oh, we shall allow them even sin, they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated if it is done with our permission that we allow them to sin because we love them, and the punishment for these sins we take upon ourselves And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviours who have taken on themselves their sins before God And they will have no secrets from us We shall allow or forbid them to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children—according to whether they have been obedient or disobedient—and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully

The most painful secrets of their conscience, all, all they will bring to us, and we shall have an answer for all And they will be glad to believe our answer for it will save them from the great

anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves And all will be happy, all the millions of creatures except the hundred thousand who rule over them For only we, we who guard the mystery, shall be unhappy There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil Peacefully they will die, peacefully they will expue in Thy name and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death But we shall keep the secret, and for their happiness we shall allure them with the reward of heaven and eternity Though if there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they

It is prophesied that Thou wilt come again in victory, Thou wilt come with Thy chosen, the proud and strong, but we will say that they have only saved themselves, but we have saved all We are told that the harlot who sits upon the beast, and holds in her hands the *mystery*, shall be put to shame that the weak will rise up again, and will rend her royal purple and will strip naked her loathsome body But then I will stand up and point out to Thee the thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before Thee and say Judge us if Thou canst and darest Know that I fear Thee not Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locusts, I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect, among the strong and powerful, thirsting to make up the number But I awakened and would not serve madness I turned back and joined the ranks of those *who have corrected Thy work* I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up I repeat to-morrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us For if any one has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou To-morrow I shall burn Thee DIXI

Ivan stopped He was carried away as he talked and spoke with excitement, when he had finished, he suddenly smiled

Alyosha had listened in silence, towards the end he was greatly moved and seemed several times on the point of interrupting, but restrained himself. Now his words came with a rush.

But that's absurd! he cried, flushing. 'Your poem is in praise of Jesus, not in blame of Him—as you meant it to be. And who will believe you about freedom? Is that the way to understand it? That's not the idea of it in the Orthodox Church. That's Rome, and not even the whole of Rome, it's false—those are the worst of the Catholics: the Inquisitors, the Jesuits! And there could not be such a fantastic creature as your Inquisitor. What are these sins of mankind they take on themselves? Who are these keepers of the mystery who have taken some curse upon themselves for the happiness of mankind? When have they been seen? We know the Jesuits, they are spoken ill of, but surely they are not what you describe? They are not that at all, not at all. They are simply the Romish army for the earthly sovereignty of the world in the future, with the Pontiff of Rome for Emperor—that's their ideal, but there's no sort of mystery or lofty melancholy about it. It's simple lust of power, of filthy earthly gain, of domination—something like a universal serfdom with them as masters—that's all they stand for. They don't even believe in God perhaps. Your suffering inquisitor is a mere fantasy.'

Stay, stay, laughed Ivan, 'how hot you are! A fantasy you say, let it be so! Of course it's a fantasy. But allow me to say: do you really think that the Roman Catholic movement of the last centuries is actually nothing but the lust of power, of filthy earthly gain? Is that Father Paissy's teaching?'

No, no, on the contrary, Father Paissy did once say something rather the same as you—but of course it's not the same, not a bit the same. Alyosha hastily corrected himself.

A precious admission, in spite of your not a bit the same. I ask you why your Jesuits and Inquisitors have united simply for vile material gain? Why can there not be among them one martyr oppressed by great sorrow and loving humanity? You see, only suppose that there was one such man among all those who desire nothing but filthy material gain—if there's only one like my old

inquisitor, who had himself eaten roots in the desert and made frenzied efforts to subdue his flesh to make himself free and perfect. But yet all his life he loved humanity, and suddenly his eyes were opened, and he saw that it is no great moral blessedness to attain perfection and freedom, if at the same time one gains the conviction that millions of God's creatures have been created as a mockery, that they will never be capable of using their freedom, that these poor rebels can never turn into giants to complete the tower, that it was not for such geese that the great idealist dreamt his dream of harmony. Seeing all that he turned back and joined—the clever people. Surely that could have happened?

Joined whom, what clever people? cried Alyosha, completely carried away. They have no such great cleverness and no mysteries and secrets. Perhaps nothing but Atheism, that's all their secret. Your inquisitor does not believe in God, that's his secret!

What if it is so! At last you have guessed it. It's perfectly true that that's the whole secret, but isn't that suffering, at least for a man like that, who has wasted his whole life in the desert and yet could not shake off his incurable love of humanity? In his old age he reached the clear conviction that nothing but the advice of the great dread spirit could build up any tolerable sort of life for the feeble, unruly, incomplete empirical creatures created in jest. And so convinced of this, he sees that he must follow the counsel of the wise spirit, the dread spirit of death and destruction, and therefore accept lying and deception, and lead men consciously to death and destruction, and yet deceive them all the way so that they may not notice where they are being led, that the poor blind creatures may at least on the way think themselves happy. And note, the deception is in the name of Him in Whose ideal the old man had so fervently believed all his life long. Is not that tragic? And if only one such stood at the head of the whole army filled with the lust of power only for the sake of filthy gain—would not one such be enough to make a tragedy? More than that, one such standing at the head is enough to create the actual leading idea of the Roman Church with all its armies

and Jesuits, its highest idea I tell you frankly that I firmly believe that there has always been such a man among those who stood at the head of the movement Who knows, there may have been some such even among the Roman Popes Who knows, perhaps the spirit of that accused old man who loves mankind so obstinately in his own way, is to be found even now in a whole multitude of such old men, existing not by chance but by agreement, as a secret league formed long ago for the guarding of the mystery, to guard it from the weak and the unhappy, so as to make them happy No doubt it is so, and so it must be indeed I fancy that even among the Masons there's something of the same mystery at the bottom, and that that's why the Catholics so detest the Masons as their rivals breaking up the unity of the idea, while it is so essential that there should be one flock and one shepherd But from the way I defend my idea I might be an author impatient of your criticism Enough of it

You are perhaps a Mason yourself! broke suddenly from Alyosha 'You don't believe in God,' he added, speaking this time very sorrowfully He fancied besides that his brother was looking at him ironically How does your poem end? he asked, suddenly looking down Or was it the end?

I meant to end it like this When the Inquisitor ceased speaking he waited some time for his Prisoner to answer him His silence weighed down upon him He saw that the Prisoner had listened intently all the time, looking gently in his face and evidently not wishing to reply The old man longed for Him to say something, however bitter and terrible But He suddenly approached the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless aged lips That was all his answer The old man shuddered His lips moved He went to the door, opened it, and said to Him Go, and come no more come not at all never, never! And he let Him out into the dark alleys of the town The Prisoner went away

And the old man?

The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his idea

'And you with him, you too?' cried Alyosha, mournfully
Ivan laughed

Why, it's all nonsense, Alyosha! It's only a senseless poem of a senseless student, who could never write two lines of verse. Why do you take it so seriously? Surely you don't suppose I am going straight off to the Jesuits, to join the men who are correcting His work? Good Lord, it's no business of mine. I told you, all I want is to live on to thirty, and then dash the cup to the ground!

But the little sticky leaves and the precious tombs, and the blue sky, and the woman you love! How will you live, how will you love them? Alyosha cried sorrowfully. With such a hell in your heart and your head, how can you? No, that's just what you are going away for, to join them—if not, you will kill yourself—you can't endure it!

There is a strength to endure everything, Ivan said with a cold smile.

What strength?

The strength of the Karamazov—the strength of the Karamazov baseness.

To sink into debauchery, to stifle your soul with corruption, yes?

Possibly even that—only perhaps till I am thirty I shall escape it, and then—

How will you escape it? By what will you escape it? That's impossible with your ideas.

In the Karamazov way, again.

Everything is lawful, you mean? Everything is lawful, is that it?

Ivan scowled, and all at once turned strangely pale.

Ah, you've caught up yesterday's phrase, which so offended Miusov—and which Dmitri pounced upon so naively and paraphrased! he smiled queerly. Yes, if you like, everything is lawful since the word has been said. I won't deny it. And Mitya's version isn't bad.

Alyosha looked at him in silence.

I thought that going away from here I have you at least, Ivan said suddenly, with unexpected feeling—but now I see that there is no place for me even in your heart, my dear hermit. The formula, all is lawful, I won't renounce—will you renounce me for that, yes?

Alyosha got up, went to him and softly kissed him on the lips

"That's plagiarism, cried Ivan, highly delighted You stole that from my poem Thank you though Get up, Alyosha, it's time we were going, both of us

1879-1880

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER



Noon Wine

TIME 1896-1905

PLACE Small South Texas Farm

The two grubby small boys with tow colored hair who were digging among the ragweed in the front yard sat back on their heels and said, Hello, when the tall bony man with straw colored hair turned in at their gate. He did not pause at the gate, it had swung back, conveniently half open, long ago, and was now sunk so firmly on its broken hinges no one thought of trying to close it. He did not even glance at the small boys, much less give them good day. He just clumped down his big square dusty shoes one after the other steadily like a man following a plow, as if he knew the place well and knew where he was going and what he would find there. Rounding the right hand corner of the house under the row of chinaberry trees, he walked up to the side porch where Mr. Thompson was pushing a big swing churn back and forth.

Mr. Thompson was a tough weather beaten man with stiff black hair and a week's growth of black whiskers. He was a noisy proud man who held his neck so straight his whole face stood level with his Adam's apple and the whiskers continued down his neck and disappeared into a black thatch under his open collar. The churn rumbled and swished like the belly of a trotting horse, and Mr. Thompson seemed somehow to be driving a horse with one hand, reining it in and urging it forward, and every now and then he turned halfway around and squirted a tremendous spit of tobacco juice out over the steps. The door stones were brown and gleaming with fresh tobacco juice. Mr. Thompson had been

churning quite a while and he was tired of it. He was just fetching a mouthful of juice to squirt again when the stranger came around the corner and stopped. Mr. Thompson saw a narrow chested man with blue eyes so pale they were almost white, looking and not looking at him from a long gaunt face, under white eyebrows. Mr. Thompson judged him to be another of these Irish men, by his long upper lip.

Howdy do, sir, said Mr. Thompson politely, swinging his churn.

I need work, said the man, clearly enough but with some kind of foreign accent. Mr. Thompson couldn't place it. Wasn't Cajun and it wasn't Nigger and it wasn't Dutch, so it had him stumped. You need a man here?

Mr. Thompson gave the churn a great shove and it swung back and forth several times on its own momentum. He sat on the steps, shot his quid into the grass, and said, Set down. Maybe we can make a deal. I been kinda lookin' round for somebody. I had two niggers but they got into a cutting scrape up the creek last week, one of 'em dead now and the other in the hoosegow at Cold Springs. Neither one of 'em worth killing, come right down to it. So it looks like I'd better get somebody. Where'd you work last?

North Dakota, said the man, folding himself down on the other end of the steps, but not as if he were tired. He folded up and settled down as if it would be a long time before he got up again. He never had looked at Mr. Thompson, but there wasn't anything sneaking in his eye, either. He didn't seem to be looking anywhere else. His eyes sat in his head and let things pass by them. They didn't seem to be expecting to see anything worth looking at. Mr. Thompson waited a long time for the man to say something more, but he had gone into a brown study.

North Dakota, said Mr. Thompson, trying to remember where that was. That's a right smart distance off, seems to me.

I can do everything on farm, said the man, cheap. I need work.

Mr. Thompson settled himself to get down to business. My name's Thompson, Mr. Royal Earle Thompson, he said.

'I'm Mr Helton,' said the man, Mr Olaf Helton He did not move

Well, now, said Mr Thompson in his most carrying voice, I guess we'd better talk turkey

When Mr Thompson expected to drive a bargain he always grew very hearty and jovial There was nothing wrong with him except that he hated like the devil to pay wages He said so himself You furnish grub and a shack, he said, and then you got to pay 'em besides It ain't right Besides the wear and tear on your implements, he said, they just let everything go to rack and ruin So he began to laugh and shout his way through the deal

Now, what I want to know is, how much you fixing to gouge outa me? he brayed, slapping his knee After he had kept it up as long as he could, he quieted down, feeling a little sheepish, and cut himself a chew Mr Helton was staring out somewhere between the barn and the orchard, and seemed to be sleeping with his eyes open

I'm good worker, said Mr Helton as from the tomb I get dollar a day

Mr Thompson was so shocked he forgot to start laughing again at the top of his voice until it was nearly too late to do any good

Haw, haw, he bawled Why, for a dollar a day I'd hire out myself What kinda work is it where they pay you a dollar a day?

Wheatfields, North Dakota, said Mr Helton, not even smiling

Mr Thompson stopped laughing Well, this ain't any wheat-field by a long shot This is more of a dairy farm, he said feeling apologetic My wife, she was set on a dairy, she seemed to like working around with cows and calves so I humored her But it was a mistake, he said I got nearly everything to do, anyhow My wife ain't very strong She's sick today, that's a fact She's been porely for the last few days We plant a little feed and a corn patch, and there's the orchard, and a few pigs and chickens, but our main hold is the cows Now just speakin' as one man to another, there ain't any money in it Now I can't give you no dollar a day because ackshally I don't make that much out of it

No, sir, we get along on a lot less than a dollar a day, I'd say, if we figger up everything in the long run. Now, I paid seven dollars a month to the two niggers, three-fifty each, and grub, but what I say is, one middlin' good white man ekals a whole passel of niggers any day in the week, so I'll give you seven dollars and you eat at the table with us, and you'll be treated like a white man, as the feller says——

That's all right, said Mr. Helton. I take it.

Well, now I guess we'll call it a deal, hey? Mr. Thompson jumped up as if he had remembered important business. Now, you just take hold of that churn and give it a few swings, will you, while I ride to town on a coupla little errands. I ain't been able to leave the place all week. I guess you know what to do with butter after you get it, don't you?

I know, said Mr. Helton without turning his head. I know butter business. He had a strange drawling voice, and even when he spoke only two words his voice waved slowly up and down and the emphasis was in the wrong place. Mr. Thompson wondered what kind of foreigner Mr. Helton could be.

Now just where did you say you worked last? he asked, as if he expected Mr. Helton to contradict himself.

North Dakota, said Mr. Helton.

Well, one place is good as another once you get used to it, said Mr. Thompson, amply. You're a forriner, ain't you?

I'm a Swede, said Mr. Helton, beginning to swing the churn.

Mr. Thompson let forth a booming laugh as if this was the best joke on somebody he'd ever heard. Well, I'll be damned, he said at the top of his voice. A Swede, well, now, I'm afraid you'll get pretty lonesome around here. I never seen any Swedes in this neck of the woods.

That's all right, said Mr. Helton. He went on swinging the churn as if he had been working on the place for years.

In fact I might as well tell you, you're practically the first Swede I ever laid eyes on.

That's all right, said Mr. Helton.

Mr. Thompson went into the front room where Mrs. Thompson was lying down, with the green shades drawn. She had a bowl

of water by her on the table and a wet cloth over her eyes. She took the cloth off at the sound of Mr. Thompson's boots and said, "What's all the noise out there? Who is it?"

"Got a feller out there says he's a Swede, Ellie," said Mr. Thompson. "says he knows how to make butter."

"I hope it turns out to be the truth," said Mrs. Thompson. "Looks like my head never will get any better."

"Don't you worry," said Mr. Thompson. "You fret too much. Now I'm goin'ta ride into town and get a little order of groceries."

"Don't you linger, now, Mr. Thompson," said Mrs. Thompson. "Don't go to the hotel. She meant the saloon, the proprietor also had rooms for rent upstairs."

"Just a coupla little toddies," said Mr. Thompson, laughing loudly, "never hurt anybody."

"I never took a dram in my life," said Mrs. Thompson, "and what's more I never will."

"I wasn't talking about the womenfolks," said Mr. Thompson.

The sound of the swinging churn rocked Mrs. Thompson first into a gentle doze, then a deep drowse from which she waked suddenly knowing that the swinging had stopped a good while ago. She sat up shading her weak eyes from the flat strips of late summer sunlight between the sill and the lowered shades. There she was, thank God, still alive, with supper to cook but no churning on hand and her head still bewildered, but easy. Slowly she realized she had been hearing a new sound even in her sleep. Somebody was playing a tune on the harmonica, not merely shrilling up and down making a sickening noise, but really playing a pretty tune, merry and sad.

She went out through the kitchen, stepped off the porch, and stood facing the east, shading her eyes. When her vision cleared and settled, she saw a long, pale haired man in blue jeans sitting in the doorway of the hired man's shack, tilted back in a kitchen chair, blowing away at the harmonica with his eyes shut. Mrs. Thompson's heart fluttered and sank. Heavens, he looked lazy and worthless, he did, now. First a lot of no count fiddling darkies and then a no count white man. It was just like Mr. Thompson to take on that kind. She did wish he would be more considerate, and

take a little trouble with his business. She wanted to believe in her husband, and there were too many times when she couldn't. She wanted to believe that tomorrow, or at least the day after, life, such a battle at best, was going to be better.

She walked past the shack without glancing aside, stepping carefully, bent at the waist because of the nagging pain in her side, and went to the springhouse, trying to harden her mind to speak very plainly to that new hired man if he had not done his work.

The milk house was only another shack of weather-beaten boards nailed together hastily years before because they needed a milk house, it was meant to be temporary, and it was, already shapeless, leaning this way and that over a perpetual cool trickle of water that fell from a little grot, almost choked with pallid ferns. No one else in the whole countryside had such a spring on his land. Mr. and Mrs. Thompson felt they had a fortune in that spring if ever they got around to doing anything with it.

Rickety wooden shelves clung at hazard in the square around the small pool where the larger pails of milk and butter stood, fresh and sweet in the cold water. One hand supporting her flat, pained side, the other shading her eyes, Mrs. Thompson leaned over and peered into the pails. The cream had been skimmed and set aside, there was a rich roll of butter, the wooden molds and shallow pans had been scrubbed and scalded for the first time in who knows when, the barrel was full of buttermilk ready for the pigs and the weanling calves, the hard-packed dirt floor had been swept smooth. Mrs. Thompson straightened up again, smiling tenderly. She had been ready to scold him, a poor man who needed a job, who had just come there and who might not have been expected to do things properly at first. There was nothing she could do to make up for the injustice she had done him in her thoughts but to tell him how she appreciated his good clean work, finished already in no time at all. She ventured near the door of the shack with her careful steps, Mr. Helton opened his eyes, stopped playing and brought his chair down straight, but did not look at her, or get up. She was a little frail woman with long thick brown hair in a braid, a suffering patient mouth and diseased eyes which cried easily. She wove her fingers into

an eyeshade, thumbs on temples, and, winking her tearful lids, said with a polite little manner, 'Howdy do, sir. I'm Miz Thompson and I wanted to tell you I think you did real well in the milk house. It's always been a hard place to keep.'

He said, 'That's all right,' in a slow voice, without moving.

Mrs. Thompson waited a moment. 'That's a pretty tune you're playing. Most folks don't seem to get much music out of a harmonica.'

Mr. Helton sat humped over, long legs sprawling, his spine in a bow, running his thumb over the square mouth stops, except for his moving hand he might have been asleep. The harmonica was a big shiny new one, and Mrs. Thompson, her gaze wandering about, counted five others, all good and expensive, standing in a row on the shelf beside his cot. He must carry them around in his jumper pocket, she thought and noted there was not a sign of any other possession lying about. 'I see you're mighty fond of music,' she said. 'We used to have an old accordion, and Mr. Thompson could play it right smart, but the little boys broke it up.'

Mr. Helton stood up rather suddenly, the chair clattered under him, his knees straightened though his shoulders did not, and he looked at the floor as if he were listening carefully. 'You know how little boys are,' said Mrs. Thompson. 'You'd better set them harmonicas on a high shelf or they'll be after them. They're great hands for getting into things. I try to learn 'em, but it don't do much good.'

Mr. Helton, in one wide gesture of his long arms, swept his harmonicas up against his chest and from there transferred them in a row to the ledge where the roof joined to the wall. He pushed them back almost out of sight.

'That'll do, maybe,' said Mrs. Thompson. 'Now I wonder,' she said, turning and closing her eyes helplessly against the stronger western light, 'I wonder what became of them little tads. I can't keep up with them.' She had a way of speaking about her children as if they were rather troublesome nephews on a prolonged visit.

Down by the creek, said Mr. Helton, in his hollow voice. Mrs. Thompson, pausing confusedly, decided he had answered her.

question. He stood in silent patience, not exactly waiting for her to go, perhaps, but pretty plainly not waiting for anything else. Mrs. Thompson was perfectly accustomed to all kinds of men full of all kinds of cranky ways. The point was, to find out just how Mr. Helton's crankiness was different from any other man's, and then get used to it, and let him feel at home. Her father had been cranky; her brothers and uncles had all been set in their ways and none of them alike, and every hired man she'd ever seen had quirks and crotchets of his own. Now here was Mr. Helton, who was a Swede, who wouldn't talk, and who played the harmonica besides.

They'll be needing something to eat, said Mrs. Thompson in a vague friendly way, 'pretty soon. Now I wonder what I ought to be thinking about for supper? Now what do you like to eat, Mr. Helton? We always have plenty of good butter and milk and cream, that's a blessing. Mr. Thompson says we ought to sell all of it, but I say my family comes first. Her little face went all out of shape in a pained blind smile.

I eat anything, said Mr. Helton, his words wandering up and down.

He *can't* talk, for one thing, thought Mrs. Thompson, it's a shame to keep at him when he don't know the language good. She took a slow step away from the shack, looking back over her shoulder. We usually have cornbread except on Sundays, she told him. I suppose in your part of the country you don't get much good cornbread.

Not a word from Mr. Helton. She saw from her eye corner that he had sat down again, looking at his harmonica, chair tilted. She hoped he would remember it was getting near milking time. As she moved away, he started playing again, the same tune.

Milking time came and went. Mrs. Thompson saw Mr. Helton going back and forth between the cow barn and the milk house. He swung along in an easy lope, shoulders bent, head hanging, the big buckets balancing like a pair of scales at the ends of his bony arms. Mr. Thompson rode in from town sitting straighter than usual, chin in, a towsack full of supplies swung behind the saddle. After a trip to the barn, he came into the kitchen full of good will, and gave Mrs. Thompson a hearty smack on the

cheek after dusting her face off with his tough whiskers. He had been to the hotel, that was plain. Took a look around the premises, Ellie, he shouted. That Swede sure is grinding out the labor. But he is the closest mouthed feller I ever met up with in all my days. Looks like he's scared he'll crack his jaw if he opens his front teeth.

Mrs. Thompson was stirring up a big bowl of buttermilk corn bread. You smell like a toper, Mr. Thompson, she said with perfect dignity. I wish you'd get one of the little boys to bring me in an extra load of firewood. I'm thinking about baking a batch of cookies tomorrow.

Mr. Thompson, all at once smelling the liquor on his own breath, sneaked out, justly rebuked and brought in the firewood himself. Arthur and Herbert, grubby from thatched head to toes, from skin to shirt, came stamping in yelling for supper. Go wash your faces and comb your hair, said Mrs. Thompson automatically. They returned to the porch. Each one put his hand under the pump and wet his forelock, combed it down with his fingers, and returned at once to the kitchen, where all the fair prospects of life were centered. Mrs. Thompson set an extra plate and commanded Arthur, the eldest, eight years old, to call Mr. Helton for supper.

Arthur, without moving from the spot, bawled like a bull calf, Saaaaaay, Hlllllllton, suuuuuupper's ready! and added in a lower voice, You big Swede!

'Listen to me, said Mrs. Thompson, that's no way to act. Now you go out there and ask him decent or I'll get your daddy to give you a good licking.

Mr. Helton loomed long and gloomy, in the doorway. Sit right there, boomed Mr. Thompson, waving his arm. Mr. Helton swung his square shoes across the kitchen in two steps, slumped onto the bench and sat. Mr. Thompson occupied his chair at the head of the table, the two boys scrambled into place opposite Mr. Helton, and Mrs. Thompson sat at the end nearest the stove. Mrs. Thompson clasped her hands, bowed her head and said aloud hastily, Lord, for all these and Thy other blessings we thank Thee in Jesus' name, amen, trying to finish before Herbert's rusty little paw reached the nearest dish. Otherwise she would be duty bound to send him away from the table, and growing children need their meals. Mr.

Thompson and Arthur always waited, but Heibert, aged six, was too young to take training yet

Mr and Mrs Thompson tried to engage Mr Helton in conversation, but it was a failure They tried first the weather, and then the crops, and then the cows, but Mr Helton simply did not reply Mr Thompson then told something funny he had seen in town It was about some of the other old grangers at the hotel, friends of his, giving beer to a goat, and the goat's subsequent behavior Mr Helton did not seem to hear Mrs Thompson laughed dutifully, but she didn't think it was very funny She had heard it often before, though Mr Thompson, each time he told it, pretended it had happened that self same day It must have happened years ago if it ever happened at all, and it had never been a story that Mrs Thompson thought suitable for mixed company The whole thing came of Mr Thompson's weakness for a dram too much now and then, though he voted for local option at every election She passed the food to Mr Helton, who took a helping of everything, but not much, not enough to keep him up to his full powers if he expected to go on working the way he had started

At last, he took a fair sized piece of cornbread, wiped his plate up as clean as if it had been licked by a hound dog stuffed his mouth full, and, still chewing, slid off the bench and started for the door

Good night, Mr Helton,' said Mrs Thompson and the other Thompsons took it up in a scattered chorus Good night Mr Helton!

Good night, said Mr Helton's wavering voice grudgingly from the darkness

Gude not, said Arthur, imitating Mr Helton

Gude not said Heibert, the copy cat

You don't do it right, said Arthur Now listen to me Guuuuude naht, and he ran a hollow scale in a luxury of successful impersonation Herbert almost went into a fit with joy

Now you *stop* that, said Mrs Thompson He can't help the way he talks You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, both of you, making fun of a poor stranger like that How'd you like to be a stranger in a strange land?

I'd like it, said Arthur I think it would be fun '

'They're both regular heathens, Ellie, said Mr Thompson. Just plain ignoramuses. He turned the face of awful fatherhood upon his young. You're both going to get sent to school next year, and that'll knock some sense into you.

I'm going to get sent to the reformatory when I'm old enough, piped up Herbert. That's where I'm going.

Oh, you are, are you? asked Mr Thompson. Who says so?

The Sunday School Superintendent, said Herbert, a bright boy showing off.

You see? said Mr Thompson, staring at his wife. What did I tell you? He became a hurricane of wrath. Get to bed, you two, he roared until his Adam's apple shuddered. Get now before I take the hide off you! They got, and shortly from their attic bedroom the sounds of scuffling and snorting and giggling and growling filled the house and shook the kitchen ceiling.

Mrs Thompson held her head and said in a small uncertain voice, It's no use picking on them when they're so young and tender. I can't stand it.

My goodness, Ellie, said Mr Thompson, we've got to raise 'em. We can't just let 'em grow up hog wild.

She went on in another tone. That Mr Helton seems all right even if he can't be made to talk. Wonder how he comes to be so far from home.

Like I said, he isn't no whamper-jaw, said Mr Thompson, but he sure knows how to lay out the work. I guess that's the main thing around here. Country's full of fellers trampin' round looking for work.

Mrs Thompson was gathering up the dishes. She now gathered up Mr Thompson's plate from under his chin. To tell you the honest truth, she remarked, I think it's a mighty good change to have a man around the place who knows how to work and keep his mouth shut. Means he'll keep out of our business. Not that we've got anything to hide, but it's convenient.

That's a fact, said Mr Thompson. Haw, haw, he shouted suddenly. Means you can do all the talking, huh?

The only thing, went on Mrs Thompson, is this: he don't eat hearty enough to suit me. I like to see a man set down and relish a good meal. My granma used to say it was no use putting depend

ence on a man who won't set down and make out his dinner I hope it won't be that way this time

Tell *you* the truth, Ellie, said Mr Thompson, picking his teeth with a fork and leaning back in the best of good humors, I always thought your granma was a ter'ble ole fool She'd just say the first thing that popped into her head and call it God's wisdom

My granma wasn't anybody's fool Nine times out of ten she knew what she was talking about I always say, the first thing you think is the best thing you can say

Well, said Mr Thompson, going into another shout you're so ree'fined about that goat story, you just try speaking out in mixed comp'ny sometime! You just try it S'pose you happened to be thinking about a hen and a rooster, hey? I reckon you'd shock the B'ptist preacher! He gave her a good pinch on her thin little rump No more meat on you than a rabbit, he said, fondly Now I like 'em cornfed

Mrs Thompson looked at him open-eyed and blushed She could see better by lamplight Why Mr Thompson sometimes I think you're the evilest minded m'n that ever lived She took a handful of hair on the crown of his head and gave it a good, slow pull That's to show you how it feels, pinching so hard when you're supposed to be playing, she said, gently

In spite of his situation in life, Mr Thompson had never been able to outgrow his deep conviction that running a dairy and chasing after chickens was woman's work He was fond of saying that he could plow a furrow, cut sorghum shuck corn, handle a team, build a corn crib, as well as any man Buying and selling too, we'e man's work Twice a week he drove the spring wagon to market with the fiesh butter, a few eggs fruits in their proper season, sold them, pocketed the change, and spent it as seemed best, being careful not to dig into Mrs Thompson's pin money

But from the first the cows worried him, coming up regularly twice a day to be milked, standing there reproaching him with their smug female faces Calves worried him fighting the rope and strangling themselves until their eyes bulged, trying to get at the teat Wrestling with a calf unmanned him, like having to change a baby's diaper Milk worried him, coming bitter sometimes, dry

ing up, tuning sour Hens worried him cackling clucking, hatching out when you least expected it and leading their broods into the barnyard where the horses could step on them, dying of roup and wyneck and getting plagues of chicken lice, laying eggs all over Gods creation so that half of them were spoiled before a man could find them in spite of a rack of nests Mrs Thompson had set out for them in the feed room Hens were a blasted nuisance

Slopping hogs was hired mans work, in Mr Thompsons opinion Killing hogs was a job for the boss, but scraping them and cutting them up was for the hired man again, and again womans proper work was dressing meat smoking, pickling and making lard and sausage All his carefully limited fields of activity were related somehow to Mr Thompsons feeling for the appearance of things, his own appearance in the sight of God and man It dont *look* right, was his final reason for not doing anything he did not wish to do

It was his dignity and his reputation that he cared about, and there were only a few kinds of work manly enough for Mr Thompson to undertake with his own hands Mrs Thompson to whom so many forms of work would have been becoming had simply gone down on him early He saw, after a while, how short sighted it had been of him to expect much from Mrs Thompson, he had fallen in love with her delicate waist and lace-trimmed petticoats and big blue eyes, and, though all those charms had disappeared she had in the meantime become Ellie to him, not at all the same person as Miss Ellen Bridges popular Sunday School teacher in the Mountain City First Baptist Church, but his dear wife, Ellie, who was not strong Deprived as he was, however, of the main support in life which a man might expect in marriage he had almost without knowing it resigned himself to failure Head erect, a prompt payer of taxes, yearly subscriber to the preachers salary land owner and father of a family employer, a hearty good fellow among men, Mr Thompson knew, without putting it into words, that he had been going steadily down hill God amighty, it did look like somebody around the place might take a rake in hand now and then and clear up the clutter around the barn and the kitchen steps The wagon shed

was so full of broken down machinery and ragged harness and old wagon wheels and battered milk pails and rotting lumber you could hardly drive in there any more. Not a soul on the place would raise a hand to it and as for him he had all he could do with his regular work. He would sometimes in the slack season sit for hours worrying about it, squirting tobacco on the rag weeds growing in a thicket against the wood pile, wondering what a fellow could do, handicapped as he was. He looked forward to the boys growing up soon he was going to put them through the mill just as his own father had done with him when he was a boy, they were going to learn how to take hold and run the place right. He wasn't going to overdo it, but those two boys were going to earn their salt or he'd know why. Great big lubbers sitting around whittling! Mr. Thompson sometimes grew quite enmeshed with them, when imagining their possible future, big lubbers sitting around whittling or thinking about fishing trips. Well he'd put a stop to that, mighty damn quick.

As the seasons passed, and Mr. Helton took hold more and more, Mr. Thompson began to relax in his mind a little. There seemed to be nothing the fellow couldn't do, all in the days work and as a matter of course. He got up at five o'clock in the morning, boiled his own coffee and fried his own bacon and was out in the cow lot before Mr. Thompson had even begun to yawn, stretch, groan, roar and thump around looking for his jeans. He milked the cows, kept the milk house, and churned the butter, rounded the hens up and somehow persuaded them to lay in the nests not under the house and behind the haystacks he fed them regularly and they hatched out until you couldn't set a foot down for them. Little by little the piles of trash around the barns and house disappeared. He carried buttermilk and corn to the hogs, and curried cockleburs out of the horses' manes. He was gentle with the calves, if a little grim with the cows and hens judging by his conduct. Mr. Helton had never heard of the difference between man's and woman's work on a farm.

In the second year he showed Mr. Thompson the picture of a cheese press in a mail order catalogue and said, 'This is a good thing. You buy this I make cheese.' The press was bought and Mr. Helton did make cheese, and it was sold, along with the m-

creased butter and the crates of eggs. Sometimes Mr. Thompson felt a little contemptuous of Mr. Helton's ways. It did seem kind of picayune for a man to go around picking up half a dozen ears of corn that had fallen off the wagon on the way from the field, gathering up fallen fruit to feed to the pigs, storing up old nails and stray parts of machinery, spending good time stamping a fancy pattern on the butter before it went to market. Mr. Thompson, sitting up high on the spring wagon seat, with the decorated butter in a five gallon lard can wrapped in wet towsack, driving to town, churring to the horses and snapping the reins over their backs, sometimes thought that Mr. Helton was a pretty meeching sort of fellow, but he never gave way to these feelings, he knew a good thing when he had it. It was a fact the hogs were in better shape and sold for more money. It was a fact that Mr. Thompson stopped buying feed, Mr. Helton managed the crops so well. When beef- and hog slaughtering time came, Mr. Helton knew how to save the scraps that Mr. Thompson had thrown away and wasn't above scraping guts and filling them with sausages that he made by his own methods. In all Mr. Thompson had no grounds for complaint. In the third year, he raised Mr. Helton's wages, though Mr. Helton had not asked for a raise. The fourth year, when Mr. Thompson was not only out of debt but had a little cash in the bank, he raised Mr. Helton's wages again, two dollars and a half a month each time.

The man's worth it, Ellie, said Mr. Thompson, in a glow of self justification for his extravagance. He's made this place pay, and I want him to know I appreciate it.

Mr. Helton's silence, the pallor of his eyebrows and hair, his long glum jaw and eyes that refused to see anything even the work under his hands had grown perfectly familiar to the Thompsons. At first, Mrs. Thompson complained a little. It's like sitting down at the table with a disembodied spirit, she said. 'You'd think he'd find something to say, sooner or later.'

Let him alone, said Mr. Thompson. When he gets ready to talk, he'll talk.

The years passed, and Mr. Helton never got ready to talk. After his work was finished for the day, he would come up from the barn or the milk house or the chicken house, swinging his lan-

tern, his big shoes clumping like pony hoofs on the hard path. They, sitting in the kitchen in the winter, or on the back porch in summer would hear him drag out his wooden chair, hear the creak of it tilted back, and then for a little while he would play his single tune on one or another of his harmonicas. The harmonicas were in different keys, some lower and sweeter than the others, but the same changeless tune went on, a strange tune with sudden turns in it, night after night, and sometimes even in the afternoons when Mr Helton sat down to catch his breath. At first the Thompsons liked it very much, and always stopped to listen. Later there came a time when they were fairly sick of it, and began to wish to each other that he would learn a new one. At last they did not hear it any more, it was as natural as the sound of the wind rising in the evenings, or the cows lowing, or their own voices.

Mrs Thompson pondered now and then over Mr Helton's soul. He didn't seem to be a church goer, and worked straight through Sunday as if it were any common day of the week. I think we ought to invite him to go to hear Dr Martin, she told Mr Thompson. It isn't very Christian of us not to ask him. He's not a forward kind of man. He'd wait to be asked.

Let him alone, said Mr Thompson. The way I look at it his religion is every man's own business. Besides, he ain't got any Sunday clothes. He wouldn't want to go to church in them jeans and jumpers of his. I don't know what he does with his money. He certainly don't spend it foolishly.

Still, once the notion got into her head, Mrs Thompson could not rest until she invited Mr Helton to go to church with the family next Sunday. He was pitching hay into neat little piles in the field back of the orchard. Mrs Thompson put on smoked glasses and a sunbonnet and walked all the way down there to speak to him. He stopped and leaned on his pitchfork, listening and for a moment Mrs Thompson was almost frightened at his face. The pale eyes seemed to glare past her, the eyebrows frowned, the long jaw hardened. I got work, he said bluntly, and lifting his pitchfork he turned from her and began to toss the hay. Mrs Thompson, her feelings hurt, walked back thinking that by now she should be used to Mr Helton's ways, but it

did seem like a man, even a foreigner, could be just a little polite when you gave him a Christian invitation. He's not polite, that's the only thing I've got against him," she said to Mr. Thompson. "He just can't seem to behave like other people. You'd think he had a grudge against the world," she said. "I sometimes don't know what to make of it."

In the second year something had happened that made Mrs. Thompson uneasy, the kind of thing she could not put into words, hardly into thoughts, and if she had tried to explain to Mr. Thompson it would have sounded worse than it was, or not bad enough. It was that kind of queer thing that seems to be giving a warning, and yet, nearly always nothing comes of it. It was on a hot, still spring day, and Mrs. Thompson had been down to the garden patch to pull some new carrots and green onions and string beans for dinner. As she worked, sunbonnet low over her eyes, putting each kind of vegetable in a pile by itself in her basket, she noticed how neatly Mr. Helton weeded, and how rich the soil was. He had spread it all over with manure from the barns, and worked it in, in the fall, and the vegetables were coming up fine and full. She walked back under the nubbly little fig trees where the unpruned branches leaned almost to the ground, and the thick leaves made a cool screen. Mrs. Thompson was always looking for shade to save her eyes. So she, looking idly about, saw through the screen a sight that struck her as very strange. If it had been a noisy spectacle, it would have been quite natural. It was the silence that struck her. Mr. Helton was shaking Arthur by the shoulders, ferociously, his face most terribly fixed and pale. Arthur's head snapped back and forth and he had not stiffened in resistance, as he did when Mrs. Thompson tried to shake him. His eyes were rather frightened, but surprised too, probably more surprised than anything else. Herbert stood by meekly, watching Mr. Helton dropped Arthur, and seized Herbert, and shook him with the same methodical ferocity, the same face of hatred. Herbert's mouth crumpled as if he would cry, but he made no sound. Mr. Helton let him go, turned and strode into the shack, and the little boys ran as if for their lives, without a word. They disappeared around the corner to the front of the house.

Mrs Thompson took time to set her basket on the kitchen table, to push her sunbonnet back on her head and draw it forward again, to look in the stove and make certain the fire was going, before she followed the boys. They were sitting huddled together under a clump of chinaberry trees in plain sight of her bedroom window, as if it were a safe place they had discovered.

What are you doing? asked Mrs Thompson.

They looked hang dog from under their foreheads and Arthur mumbled, Nothing.

Nothing *now*, you mean, said Mrs Thompson severely. Well, I have plenty for you to do. Come right in here this minute and help me fix vegetables. This minute.

They scrambled up very eagerly and followed her close. Mrs Thompson tried to imagine what they had been up to: she did not like the notion of Mr Helton taking it on himself to correct her little boys, but she was afraid to ask them for reasons. They might tell her a lie, and she would have to overtake them in it, and whip them. Or she would have to pretend to believe them and they would get in the habit of lying. Or they might tell her the truth, and it would be something she would have to whip them for. The very thought of it gave her a headache. She supposed she might ask Mr Helton but it was not her place to ask. She would wait and tell Mr Thompson, and let him get at the bottom of it. While her mind ran on, she kept the little boys hopping. Cut those carrot tops closer. Herbert, you're just being careless. Arthur, stop breaking up the beans so little. They're little enough already. Herbert, you go get an armload of wood. Arthur, you take these onions and wash them under the pump. Herbert, as soon as you're done here, you get a broom and sweep out this kitchen. Arthur, you get a shovel and take up the ashes. Stop picking your nose. Herbert. How often must I tell you? Arthur, you go look in the top drawer of my bureau, left hand side and bring me the vaseline for Herbert's nose. Herbert, come here to me.

They galloped through their chores, their animal spirits rose with activity, and shortly they were out in the front yard again, engaged in a wrestling match. They sprawled and fought scrambled, clutched, rose and fell shouting, as aimlessly, noisily, mo-

notonously as two puppies. They imitated various animals, not a human sound from them, and their dirty faces were streaked with sweat. Mrs. Thompson, sitting at her window, watched them with baffled pride and tenderness, they were so sturdy and healthy and growing so fast, but uneasily, too, with her pained little smile and the tears rolling from her eyelids that clinched themselves against the sunlight. They were so idle and careless, as if they had no future in this world, and no immortal souls to save, and oh, what had they been up to that Mr. Helton had shaken them, with his face positively dangerous?

In the evening before supper, without a word to Mr. Thompson of the curious fear the sight had caused her, she told him that Mr. Helton had shaken the little boys for some reason. He stepped out to the shack and spoke to Mr. Helton. In five minutes he was back, glaring at his young. He says them brats been fooling with his harmonicas. Ellie, blowing in them and getting them all dirty and full of spit and they don't play good.

Did he say all that? asked Mrs. Thompson. It doesn't seem possible.

Well, that's what he meant, anyhow, said Mr. Thompson. He didn't say it just that way. But he acted pretty worked up about it.

That's a shame, said Mrs. Thompson, a perfect shame. Now we've got to do something so they'll remember they mustn't go into Mr. Helton's things.

I'll tan their hides for them, said Mr. Thompson. I'll take a calf rope to them if they don't look out."

Maybe you'd better leave the whipping to me,' said Mrs. Thompson. You haven't got a light enough hand for children.

That's just what's the matter with them now, shouted Mr. Thompson, rotten spoiled and they'll wind up in the penitentiary. You don't half whip 'em. Just little love taps. My pa used to knock me down with a stick of stove wood or anything else that came handy.

Well, that's not saying it's right,' said Mrs. Thompson. 'I don't hold with that way of raising children. It makes them run away from home. I've seen too much of it.

I'll break every bone in em, said Mr Thompson, simmering down, if they don't mind you better and stop being so bull headed

Leave the table and wash your face and hands,' Mrs Thompson commanded the boys, suddenly They slunk out and dabbled at the pump and slunk in again, trying to make themselves small They had learned long ago that their mother always made them wash when there was trouble ahead They looked at their plates Mr Thompson opened up on them

Well, now what you got to say for yourselves about going into Mr Helton's shack and ruining his harmonicas?

The two little boys wilted, their faces drooped into the grieved hopeless lines of children's faces when they are brought to the terrible bar of blind adult justice, their eyes telegraphed each other in panic, Now we're really going to catch a licking, in despair, they dropped their buttered cornbread on their plates, their hands lagged on the edge of the table

I ought to break your ribs, said Mr Thompson, and I'm a good mind to do it

'Yes, sir, whispered Arthur, faintly

Yes sir, said Herbert, his lip trembling

Now papa, said Mrs Thompson in a warning tone The children did not glance at her They had no faith in her good will She had betrayed them in the first place There was no trusting her Now she might save them and she might not No use depending on her

Well, you ought to get a good thrashing You deserve it, don't you, Arthur?

Arthur hung his head Yes, sir

And the next time I catch either of you hanging around Mr Helton's shack, I'm going to take the hide off *both* of you, you hear me, Herbert?

Herbert mumbled and choked, scattering his cornbread Yes, sir

Well, now sit up and eat your supper and not another word out of you, said Mr Thompson, beginning on his own food The little boys perked up somewhat and started chewing, but every time they looked around they met their parents' eyes, regarding

them steadily. There was no telling when they would think of something new. The boys ate warily, trying not to be seen or heard, the cornbread sticking, the buttermilk gurgling, as it went down their gullets.

'And something else, Mr. Thompson,' said Mrs. Thompson after a pause. 'Tell Mr. Helton he's to come straight to us when they bother him, and not to trouble shaking them himself. Tell him we'll look after that.'

'They're so mean,' answered Mr. Thompson, staring at them. 'It's a wonder he don't just kill 'em off and be done with it. But there was something in the tone that told Arthur and Herbert that nothing more worth worrying about was going to happen this time. Heaving deep sighs, they sat up, reaching for the food nearest them.'

'Listen,' said Mrs. Thompson, suddenly. 'The little boys stopped eating. Mr. Helton hasn't come for his supper. Arthur, go and tell Mr. Helton he's late for supper. Tell him nice, now.'

Arthur, miserably depressed, slid out of his place and made for the door, without a word.

There were no miracles of fortune to be brought to pass on a small dairy farm. The Thompsons did not grow rich, but they kept out of the poor house, as Mr. Thompson was fond of saying, meaning he had got a little foothold in spite of Ellie's poor health, and unexpected weather, and strange declines in market prices, and his own mysterious handicaps which weighed him down. Mr. Helton was the hope and the prop of the family, and all the Thompsons became fond of him, or at any rate they ceased to regard him as in any way peculiar, and looked upon him, from a distance they did not know how to bridge, as a good man and a good friend. Mr. Helton went his way, worked, played his tune. Nine years passed. The boys grew up and learned to work. They could not remember the time when Ole Helton hadn't been there—a grouchy cuss, Brother Bones, Mr. Helton, the dairymaid, that Big Swede. If he had heard them, he might have been annoyed at some of the names they called him. But he did not hear them, and besides they meant no harm—or at least such harm as existed was all there, in the names, the boys referred to their father as the

Old Man, or the Old Geezer, but not to his face. They lived through by main strength all the grimy, secret, oblique phases of growing up and got past the crisis safely if anyone does. Their parents could see they were good solid boys with hearts of gold in spite of their rough ways. Mr. Thompson was relieved to find that, without knowing how he had done it, he had succeeded in raising a set of boys who were not trifling whittlers. They were such good boys Mr. Thompson began to believe they were born that way, and that he had never spoken a harsh word to them in their lives. Much less thrashed them. Herbert and Arthur never disputed his word.

Mr. Helton, his hair wet with sweat, plastered to his dripping forehead, his jumper streaked dark and light blue and clinging to his ribs, was chopping a little firewood. He chopped slowly, struck the ax into the end of the chopping log, and piled the wood up neatly. He then disappeared round the house into his shack which shared with the wood pile a good shade from a row of mulberry trees. Mr. Thompson was lolling in a swing chair on the front porch, a place he had never liked. The chair was new, and Mrs. Thompson had wanted it on the front porch, though the side porch was the place for it, being cooler, and Mr. Thompson wanted to sit in the chair, so there he was. As soon as the new wore off of it, and Ellie's pride in it was exhausted, he would move it round to the side porch. Meantime the August heat was almost unbearable, the air so thick you could poke a hole in it. The dust was inches thick on everything, though Mr. Helton sprinkled the whole yard regularly every night. He even shot the hose upward and washed the tree tops and the roof of the house. They had laid waterpipes to the kitchen and an outside faucet. Mr. Thompson must have dozed for he opened his eyes and shut his mouth just in time to save his face before a stranger who had driven up to the front gate. Mr. Thompson stood up, put on his hat, pulled up his jeans, and watched while the stranger tied his team, attached to a light spring wagon to the hitching post. Mr. Thompson recognized the team and wagon. They were from a livery stable in Buda. While the stranger was opening the gate,

'I ain't come neither to buy nor sell. Fact is, I want to see you about something that's of interest to us both. Yes, sir, I'd like to have a little talk with you, and it won't cost you a cent.

I guess that's fair enough, said Mr. Thompson, reluctantly. Come on around the house where there's a little shade.

They went round and seated themselves on two stumps under a chinabeary tree.

Yes, sir, Homer T. Hatch is my name and America is my nation, said the stranger. I reckon you must know the name. I used to have a cousin named Jameson Hatch lived up the country a ways.'

Don't think I know the name, said Mr. Thompson. There's some Hatchers settled somewhere around Mountain City.

Don't know the old Hatch family, cried the man in deep concern. He seemed to be pitying Mr. Thompson's ignorance. Why we came over from Georgia fifty years ago. Been here long yourself?

Just all my whole life, said Mr. Thompson, beginning to feel peevish. And my pa and my grampap before me. Yes, sir, we've been right here all along. Anybody wants to find a Thompson knows where to look for him. My grampap immigrated in 1836.

From Ireland, I reckon? said the stranger.

From Pennsylvania, said Mr. Thompson. Now what makes you think we came from Ireland?

The stranger opened his mouth and began to shout with merriment, and he shook hands with himself as if he hadn't met himself for a long time. Well, what I always says is, a feller's got to come from *somewhere*, ain't he?

While they were talking Mr. Thompson kept glancing at the face near him. He certainly did remind Mr. Thompson of some body or maybe he really had seen the man himself somewhere. He couldn't just place the features. Mr. Thompson finally decided it was just that all rabbit-teethed men looked alike.

That's right, acknowledged Mr. Thompson, rather sourly, 'but what I always say is, Thompsons have been settled here for so long it don't make much difference any more *where* they come from. Now a course, this is the slack season, and we're all just

laying round a little, but nevertheless we've all got our chores to do, and I don't want to hurry you, and so if you've come to see me on business maybe we'd better get down to it

As I said, it's not in a way, and again in a way it is said the fat man. Now I'm looking for a man named Helton, Mr Olaf Eric Helton, from North Dakota and I was told up around the country a ways that I might find him here, and I wouldn't mind having a little talk with him. No, sree, I sure wouldn't mind, if it's all the same to you

I never knew his middle name, said Mr Thompson, 'but Mr Helton is right here, and been here now for going on nine years. He's a mighty steady man and you can tell anybody I said so

I'm glad to hear that, said Mr Homer T Hatch. I like to hear of a feller mending his ways and settling down. Now when I knew Mr Helton he was pretty wild yes, sir, wild is what he was, he didn't know his own mind at all. Well, now, it's going to be a great pleasure to me to meet up with an old friend and find him all settled down and doing well by hisself

'We've all got to be young once' said Mr Thompson. 'It's like the measles, it breaks out all over you, and you're a nuisance to yourself and everybody else, but it don't last and it usually don't leave no ill effects. He was so pleased with this notion he forgot and broke into a guffaw. The stranger folded his arms over his stomach and went into a kind of fit, roaring until he had tears in his eyes. Mr Thompson stopped shouting and eyed the stranger uneasily. Now he liked a good laugh as well as any man, but there ought to be a little moderation. Now this feller laughed like a perfect lunatic, that was a fact. And he wasn't laughing because he really thought things were funny either. He was laughing for reasons of his own. Mr Thompson fell into a moody silence, and waited until Mr Hatch settled down a little

Mr Hatch got out a very dirty blue cotton bandanna and wiped his eyes. That joke just about caught me where I live, he said, almost apologetically. Now I wish I could think up things as funny as that to say. It's a gift. It's

If you want to speak to Mr Helton, I'll go and round him up,' said Mr Thompson, making motions as if he might get up. He

may be in the milk house and he may be setting in his shack this time of day It was drawing towards five o'clock It's right around the corner, he said

Oh, well there ain't no special hurry, said Mr Hatch 'I've been wanting to speak to him for a good long spell now and I guess a few minutes more won't make no difference I just more wanted to locate him like That's all

Mr Thompson stopped beginning to stand up, and unbuttoned one more button of his shirt and said, Well, he's here, and he's this kind of man that if he had any business with you he'd like to get it over He don't dawdle, that's one thing you can say for him

Mr Hatch appeared to sulk a little at these words He wiped his face with the bandanna and opened his mouth to speak, when round the house there came the music of Mr Helton's harmonica Mr Thompson raised a finger There he is, said Mr Thompson Now's your time

Mr Hatch cocked an ear towards the east side of the house and listened for a few seconds a very strange expression on his face

I know that tune like I know the palm of my own hand said Mr Thompson, but I never heard Mr Helton say what it was

That's a kind of Scandahoovian song, said Mr Hatch Where I come from they sing it a lot In North Dakota, they sing it It says something about starting out in the morning feeling so good you can't hardly stand it, so you drink up all your likker before noon All the likker, y'understand, that you was saving for the noon lay off The words ain't much, but it's a pretty tune It's a kind of drinking song He sat there drooping a little and Mr Thompson didn't like his expression It was a satisfied expression, but it was more like the cat that ate the canary

So far as I know, said Mr Thompson he ain't touched a drop since he's been on the place, and that's nine years this coming September Yes sir nine years, so far as I know, he ain't wetted his whistle once And that's more than I can say for myself, he said, meekly proud

Yes, that's a drinking song said Mr Hatch I used to play

Little Brown Jug on the fiddle when I was younger than I am now, he went on, but this Helton, he just keeps it up. He just sits and plays it by himself.

He's been playing it off and on for nine years right here on the place, said Mr. Thompson, feeling a little proprietary.

And he was certainly singing it as well, fifteen years before that, in North Dakota, said Mr. Hatch. He used to sit up in a straitjacket, practically, when he was in the asylum—

What's that you say? said Mr. Thompson. What's that?

Shucks, I didn't mean to tell you, said Mr. Hatch, a faint leer of regret in his drooping eyelids. Shucks, that just slipped out. Funny, now I'd made up my mind I wouldn't say a word, because it would just make a lot of excitement, and what I say is, if a man has lived harmless and quiet for nine years it don't matter if he is loony, does it? So long's he keeps quiet and don't do nobody harm.

You mean they had him in a straitjacket? asked Mr. Thompson, uneasily. In a lunatic asylum?

They sure did, said Mr. Hatch. That's right where they had him from time to time.

They put my Aunt Ida in one of them things in the State asylum, said Mr. Thompson. She got violent and they put her in one of these jackets with long sleeves and tied her to an iron ring in the wall, and Aunt Ida got so wild she broke a blood vessel and when they went to look after her she was dead. I'd think one of them things was dangerous.

Mr. Helton used to sing his drinking song when he was in a straitjacket, said Mr. Hatch. Nothing ever bothered him, except if you tried to make him talk. That bothered him, and he'd get violent, like your Aunt Ida. He'd get violent and then they'd put him in the jacket and go off and leave him, and he'd lay there perfectly contented, so far's you could see, singing his song. Then one night he just disappeared. Left, you might say, just went, and nobody ever saw hide or hair of him again. And then I come along and find him here, said Mr. Hatch, all settled down and playing the same song.

He never acted crazy to me, said Mr. Thompson. He always acted like a sensible man, to me. He never got married, for one

thing, and he works like a hoise and I bet he's got the first cent I paid him when he landed here, and he dont dink, and he never says a word, much less swear and he dont waste time runnin around Saturday nights, and if he's crazy, said Mr Thompson, why, I think I'll go crazy myself for a change

Haw, ha said Mr Hatch, heh, he, that's good! Ha, ha, ha, I hadn't thought of it jes like that Yeah, that's right! Lets all go crazy and get rid of our wives and save our money, hey? He smiled unpleasantly, showing his little rabbit teeth

Mr Thompson felt he was being misunderstood He turned around and motioned toward the open window back of the honeysuckle trellis Lets move off down here a little, he said I oughta thought of that before His visitor bothered Mr Thompson He had a way of taking the words out of Mr Thompson's mouth, tuining them around and mixing them up until Mr Thompson didn't know himself what he had said My wife's not very strong, said Mr Thompson She's been kind of invalid now goin on fourteen years It's mighty tough on a poor man, havin sickness in the family She had four operations, he said proudly, one right after the other, but they didn't do any good For five years handrunnin, I just turned every nickel I made over to the doctors Upshot is she's a mighty delicate woman

My old woman ' said Mr Homer T Hatch, had a back like a mule, yes, sir That woman could have moved the barn with her bare hands if she'd ever took the notion I used to say, it was a good thing she didn't know her own stien th She's dead now, though That kind wear out quicker than the puny ones I never had much use for a woman always complainin I'd get rid of her mighty quick, yes, sir, mighty quick It's just as you say a dead loss, keepin one of em up

This was not at all what Mr Thompson had heard himself say, he had been trying to explun that a wife as expensive as his was a credit to a man She's a mighty reasonable woman, said Mr Thompson, feeling baffled, but I wouldn't answer for what she'd say or do if she found out wed had a lunatic on the place all this time They had moved away from the window, Mr Thompson took Mr Hatch the front way because if he went the back way they would have to pass Mr Helton's shack For some reason

he didn't want the stranger to see or talk to Mr Helton It was strange, but that was the way Mr Thompson felt

Mr Thompson sat down again, on the chopping log offering his guest another tree stump Now, I mighta got upset myself at such a thing, once, said Mr Thompson, but now I *deefy* any thing to get me lathered up He cut himself an enormous plug of tobacco with his horn hurdled pocketknife, and offered it to Mr Hatch, who then produced his own plug and, opening a huge bowie knife with a long blade sharply whetted cut off a large wad and put it in his mouth They then compared plugs and both of them were astonished to see how different men's ideas of good chewing tobacco were

Now, for instance, said Mr Hatch, mine is lighter colored That's because, for one thing there ain't any sweetenin in this plug I like it dry natural leaf, medium strong

A little sweetenin don't do no harm so far as I'm concerned, said Mr Thompson, but it's got to be mighty little But with me, now, I want a strong leaf, I want it heavy-cured, as the feller says There's a man near here named Williams Mr John Morgan Williams, who chews a plug—well, sir, it's black as your hat and soft as melted tar It fairly drips with molasses jus plain molasses, and it chews like licorice Now, I don't call that a good chew

One man's meat ' said Mr Hatch, is another man's poison Now, such a chew would simply gag me I couldn't begin to put it in my mouth

Well, said Mr Thompson, a tinge of apology in his voice, I jus barely tasted it myself, you might say Just took a little piece in my mouth and spit it out again

I'm dead sure I couldn't even get that far, said Mr Hatch I like a dry natural chew without any artificial flavorin of any kind

Mr Thompson began to feel that Mr Hatch was trying to make out he had the best judgment in tobacco, and was going to keep up the argument until he proved it He began to feel seriously annoyed with the fat man After all, who was he and where did he come from? Who was he to go around telling other people what kind of tobacco to chew?

Artificial flavorin, Mr Hatch went on, doggedly, 'is jes put in to cover up a cheap leaf and make a man think he s gettin somethin more than he is gettin Even a little sweetenin is a sign of a cheap leaf, you can mark my words

I ve alwys paid a fur price for my plug said Mr Thompson, stuffy I m not a rich man and I dont go round settin my self up for one, but I ll say this, when it comes to such things as tobacco, I buy the best on the market

Sweetenin even a little, began Mr Hatch, shifting his plug and squirting tobacco juice at a dry-looking little rose bush that was having a hard enough time as it was standing all day in the blazing sun, its roots clenched in the baked earth, is the sign of—

'About this Mi Helton now, said Mr Thompson, determinedly I dont see no reason to hold it against a man because he went loony once or twice in his lifetime and so I dont expect to take no steps about it Not a step I ve got nothin against the man, hes always treated me fair Theys things and people, he went on, nough to drive any man loony The wonder to me is, more men dont wind up in straitjackets, the way things are going these days and times

Thats right, said Mr Hatch promptly entirely too promptly, as if he were turning Mr Thompsons meaning back on him You took the words right out of my mouth There aint every man in a straitjacket that ought to be there Ha, ha, you re right all right You got the idea

Mr Thompson sat silent and chewed steadily and stared at a spot on the ground about six feet away and felt a slow muffled resentment climbing from somewhere deep down in him, climbing and spreading all through him What was this fellow driving at? What was he trying to say? It wasnt so much his words but his looks and his way of talking that droopy look in the eye, that tone of voice, as if he was trying to mortify Mr Thompson about something Mr Thompson didnt like it, but he couldnt get hold of it either He wanted to turn around and shove the fellow off the stump, but it wouldnt look reasonable Suppose something happened to the fellow when he fell off the stump, just for instance, if he fell on the axe and cut himself, and then some

one should ask Mr Thompson why he shoved him, and what could a man say? It would look mighty funny, it would sound mighty strange to say, Well, him and me fell out over a plug of tobacco. He might just shove him anyhow and then tell people he was a fat man not used to the heat and while he was talking he got dizzy and fell off by himself, or something like that, and it wouldn't be the truth either, because it wasn't the heat and it wasn't the tobacco. Mr Thompson made up his mind to get the fellow off the place pretty quick, without seeming to be anxious, and watch him sharp till he was out of sight. It doesn't pay to be friendly with strangers from another part of the country. They're always up to something, or they'd stay at home where they belong.

And they's some people, said Mr Hatch, would jus' as soon have a loonatic around their house as not, they can't see no difference between them and anybody else. I always say, if that's the way a man feels, don't care who he associates with, why, why, that's his business, not mine. I don't wanta have a thing to do with it. Now back home in North Dakota, we don't feel that way. I'd like to a seen anybody hiring a loonatic there, aspecially after what he done.'

'I didn't understand your home was North Dakota, said Mr Thompson. I thought you said Georgia.

I've got a married sister in North Dakota, said Mr Hatch. 'married a Swede, but a white man if ever I saw one. So I say *we* because we got into a little business together out that way. And it seems like home kind of.

What did he do? asked Mr Thompson, feeling very uneasy again.

Oh, nothin' to speak of, said Mr Hatch, jovially, jus' went loony one day in the hayfield and shoved a pitchfork right square through his brother, when they was makin' hay. They was goin' to execute him, but they found out he had went crazy with the heat, as the feller says, and so they put him in the asylum. That's all he done. Nothin' to get lathered up about, ha ha ha! he said and taking out his sharp knife he began to slice off a chew as carefully as if he were cutting cake.

Well, said Mr Thompson, 'I don't deny that's news. Yes, sir,

news But I still say somethin must have drove him to it Some men make you feel like giving em a good killing just by lookin at you His brother may a been a mean ornery cuss

Brother was going to get married, said Mr Hatch, used to go courtin his girl nights Borrowed Mr Helton s harmonica to give her a serenade one evenin, and lost it Bland new harmonica

He thinks a heap of his harmonicas, said Mr Thompson Only money he ever spends, now and then he buys hisself a new one Must have a dozen in that shack, all kinds and sizes

Brother wouldn t buy him a new one, said Mr Hatch, so Mr Helton just ups, as I says, and runs his pitchfork through his brother Now you know he musta been crazy to get all worked up over a little thing like that

Sounds like it, said Mr Thompson, reluctant to agree in anything with this intrusive and disagreeable fellow He kept think ing he couldn t remember when he had taken such a dislike to a man on first sight

Seems to me you d get pretty sick of hearin the same tune year in, year out, said Mr Hatch

Well, sometimes I think it wouldn t do no harm if he learned a new one, said Mr Thompson, but he don t so there s nothin to be done about it It s a pretty good tune, though

One of the Scandahoovians told me what it meant, that s how I come to know, said Mr Hatch Especially that part about getting so gay you jus go ahead and drink up all the likker you got on hand before noon It seems like up in them Swede countries a man carries a bottle of wine around with him as a matter of course, at least that s the way I understood it Those fellers will tell you anything, though—— He broke off and spat

The idea of drinking any kind of liquor in this heat made Mr Thompson dizzy The idea of anybody feeling good on a day like this, for instance, made him tired He felt he was really suffering from the heat The fat man looked as if he had grown to the stump, he slumped there in his damp dark clothes too big for him, his belly slack in his pants, his wide black felt hat pushed off his narrow forehead red with prickly heat A bottle of good cold beer, now, would be a help, thought Mr Thompson, re-

membering the four bottles sitting deep in the pool at the spring-house, and his dry tongue squirmed in his mouth. He wasn't going to offer this man anything, though, not even a drop of water. He wasn't even going to chew any more tobacco with him. He shot out his quid suddenly, and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and studied the head near him attentively. The man was no good and he was there for no good, but what was he up to? Mr. Thompson made up his mind he'd give him a little more time to get his business, whatever it was, with Mr. Helton over, and then if he didn't get off the place he'd kick him off.

Mr. Hatch, as if he suspected Mr. Thompson's thoughts, turned his eyes, wicked and pig like, on Mr. Thompson. Fact is, he said, as if he had made up his mind about something, I might need your help in the little matter I've got on hand, but it won't cost you any trouble. Now this Mr. Helton here, like I tell you, he's a dangerous escaped loonatic, you might say. Now fact is, in the last twelve years or so I musta rounded up twenty-odd escaped loonatics besides a couple of escaped convicts that I just run into by accident like I don't make a business of it but if there's a reward, and there usually is a reward of course I get it. It amounts to a tidy little sum in the long run, but that ain't the main question. Fact is, I'm for law and order, I don't like to see lawbreakers and loonatics at large. It ain't the place for them. Now I reckon you're bound to agree with me on that, aren't you?

Mr. Thompson said, Well circumstances alters cases, as the feller says. Now, what I know of Mr. Helton, he ain't dangerous, as I told you. Something serious was going to happen, Mr. Thompson could see that. He stopped thinking about it. He'd just let this fellow shoot off his head and then see what could be done about it. Without thinking he got out his knife and plug and started to cut a chew then remembered himself and put them back in his pocket.

The law, said Mr. Hatch, is solidly behind me. Now this Mr. Helton, he's been one of my toughest cases. He's kept my record from being practically one hundred per cent. I knew him before he went loony, and I know the family, so I undertook to help out rounding him up. Well, sir, he was gone slick as a whistle, for all we knew the man was as good as dead long while

ago Now we might never have caught up with him, but do you know what he did? Well, sir, about two weeks ago his old mother gets a letter from him, and in that letter what do you reckon she found? Well, it was a check on that little bank in town for eight hundred and fifty dollars, just like that, the letter wasn't nothing much, just said he was sending her a few little savings, she might need something but there it was, name, postmark, date, everything The old woman practically lost her mind with joy She's gettin' childish, and it looked like she kinda forgot that her only living son killed his brother and went loony Mr Helton said he was getting along all right and for her not to tell nobody Well natchally, she couldn't keep it to herself, with that check to cash and everything So that's how I come to know His feelings got the better of him You coulda knocked me down with a feather He shook hands with himself and rocked, wagging his head, going Heh heh, in his throat Mr Thompson felt the corners of his mouth turning down Why, the dirty low down hound, sneaking around spying into other people's business like that Collecting blood money, that's what it was! Let him talk!

Yea, well, that musta been a surprise all right, he said, trying to hold his voice even I'd say a surprise

Well, siree, said Mr Hatch, the more I got to thinking about it, the more I just come to the conclusion that I'd better look into the matter a little, and so I talked to the old woman She's pretty decrepit, now, half blind and all, but she was all for taking the first train out and going to see her son I put it up to her square—how she was too feeble for the trip, and all So, just as a favor to her, I told her for my expenses I'd come down and see Mr Helton and bring her back all the news about him She gave me a new shirt she made herself by hand and a big Swedish kind of cake to bring to him but I musta mislaid them along the road somewhere It don't reely matter though, he probly aint in any state of mind to appreciate 'em

Mr Thompson sat up and turning round on the log looked at Mr Hatch and asked as quietly as he could, And now what are you aiming to do? That's the question

Mr Hatch slouched up to his feet and shook himself Well, I come all prepared for a little scuffle, he said I got the hand-

cuffs he said, 'but I don't want no violence if I can help it. I didn't want to say nothing around the countryside, making an uproar. I figured the two of us could overpower him. He reached into his big inside pocket and pulled them out. Handcuffs, for God's sake, thought Mr. Thompson. Coming round on a peaceable afternoon worrying a man, and making trouble, and fishing handcuffs out of his pocket on a decent family homestead, as if it was all in the day's work.

Mr. Thompson, his head buzzing, got up too. Well, he said, roundly, I want to tell you I think you've got a mighty sorry job on hand, you sure must be hard up for something to do, and now I want to give you a good piece of advice. You just drop the idea that you're going to come here and make trouble for Mr. Helton, and the quicker you drive that hired rig away from my front gate the better I'll be satisfied.

Mr. Hatch put one handcuff in his outside pocket, the other dangling down. He pulled his hat down over his eyes, and reminded Mr. Thompson of a sheriff, somehow. He didn't seem in the least nervous, and didn't take up Mr. Thompson's words. He said, 'Now listen just a minute. It ain't reasonable to suppose that a man like yourself is going to stand in the way of getting an escaped loonatic back to the asylum where he belongs. Now I know it's enough to throw you off, coming sudden like this, but fact is I counted on your being a respectable man and helping me out to see that justice is done. Now a course, if you won't help, I'll have to look around for help somewheres else. It won't look very good to your neighbors that you was harbring an escaped loonatic who killed his own brother and then you refused to give him up. It will look mighty funny.

Mr. Thompson knew almost before he heard the words that it would look funny. It would put him in a mighty awkward position. He said, 'But I've been trying to tell you all along that the man ain't loony now. He's been perfectly harmless for nine years. He s—he s——

Mr. Thompson couldn't think how to describe how it was with Mr. Helton. Why he's been like one of the family, he said, the best standby a man ever had. Mr. Thompson tried to see his way out. It was a fact Mr. Helton might go loony again any minute,

and now this fellow talking around the country would put Mr Thompson in a fix. It was a terrible position. He couldn't think of any way out. You're crazy. Mr Thompson roared suddenly, you're the crazy one around here, you're crazier than he ever was! You get off this place or I'll handcuff you and turn you over to the law. You're trespassing, shouted Mr Thompson. Get out of here before I knock you down!

He took a step towards the fat man, who backed off shrinking. Try it, try it, go ahead! and then something happened that Mr Thompson tried hard afterwards to piece together in his mind, and in fact it never did come straight. He saw the fat man with his long bowie knife in his hand, he saw Mr Helton come round the corner on the run, his long jaw dropped, his arms swinging, his eyes wild. Mr Helton came in between them, fists doubled up, then stopped short glaring at the fat man, his big frame seemed to collapse, he trembled like a shied horse and then the fat man drove at him, knife in one hand, handcuffs in the other. Mr Thompson saw it coming, he saw the blade going into Mr Helton's stomach, he knew he had the ax out of the log in his own hands, felt his arms go up over his head and bring the ax down on Mr Hatch's head as if he were stunning a beef.

Mrs Thompson had been listening uneasily for some time to the voices going on, one of them strange to her, but she was too tired at first to get up and come out to see what was going on. The confused shouting that rose so suddenly brought her up to her feet and out across the front porch without her slippers, hair half braided. Shading her eyes, she saw first Mr Helton, running all stooped over through the orchard, running like a man with dogs after him, and Mr Thompson supporting himself on the ax handle was leaning over shaking by the shoulder a man Mrs Thompson had never seen who lay doubled up with the top of his head smashed and the blood running away in a greasy looking puddle. Mr Thompson without taking his hand from the man's shoulder, said in a thick voice. He killed Mr Helton, he killed him, I saw him do it. I had to knock him out, he called loudly, but he won't come to.

Mrs Thompson said in a faint scream, Why, yonder goes Mr Helton, and she pointed. Mr Thompson pulled himself up and

looked where she pointed Mrs Thompson sat down slowly against the side of the house and began to slide forward on her face, she felt as if she were drowning, she couldn't rise to the top somehow, and her only thought was she was glad the boys were not there, they were out, fishing at Halifax, oh, God, she was glad the boys were not there

Mr and Mrs Thompson drove up to their barn about sunset Mr Thompson handed the reins to his wife, got out to open the big door and Mrs Thompson guided old Jim in under the roof The buggy was gray with dust and age, Mrs Thompson's face was gray with dust and weariness, and Mr Thompson's face, as he stood at the horse's head and began unhitching was gray except for the dark blue of his freshly shaven jaws and chin, gray and blue and caved in, but patient, like a dead man's face

Mrs Thompson stepped down to the hard packed manure of the barn floor, and shook out her light flower sprigged dress She wore her smoked glasses, and her wide shady leghorn hat with the wreath of exhausted pink and blue forget me nots hid her forehead, fixed in a knot of distress

The horse hung his head, raised a huge sigh and flexed his stiffened legs Mr Thompson's words came up muffled and hollow Poor ole Jim, he said clearing his throat, he looks pretty sunk in the ribs I guess he's had a hard week He lifted the harness up in one piece slid it off and Jim walked out of the shafts halting a little Well, this is the last time, Mr Thompson said, still talking to Jim Now you can get a good rest

Mrs Thompson closed her eyes behind her smoked glasses The last time and high time, and they should never have gone at all She did not need her glasses any more, now the good darkness was coming down again, but her eyes ran full of tears steadily, though she was not crying, and she felt better with the glasses, safer, hidden away behind them She took out her handkerchief with her hands shaking as they had been shaking ever since *that day*, and blew her nose She said, I see the boys have lighted the lamps I hope they've started the stove going

She stepped along the rough path holding her thin dress and starched petticoats around her, feeling her way between the sharp

small stones, leaving the barn because she could hardly bear to be near Mr Thompson, advancing slowly towards the house because she dreaded going there Life was all one dread the faces of her neighbors, of her boys, of her husband the face of the whole world, the shape of her own house in the darkness the very smell of the grass and the trees were horrible to her There was no place to go, only one thing to do bear it somehow—but how? She asked herself that question often How was she going to keep on living now? Why had she lived at all? She wished now she had died one of those times when she had been so sick, instead of living on for this

The boys were in the kitchen Herbert was looking at the funny pictures from last Sunday's newspapers, the Kitzenjammer Kids and Happy Hooligan His chin was in his hands and his elbows on the table, and he was really reading and looking at the pictures, but his face was unhappy Arthur was building the fire, adding kindling a stick at a time, watching it catch and blaze His face was heavier and darker than Herbert's but he was a little sullen by nature Mrs Thompson thought, he takes things harder, too Arthur said, Hello, Momma, and went on with his work Herbert swept the papers together and moved over on the bench They were big boys—fifteen and seventeen, and Arthur as tall as his father Mrs Thompson sat down beside Herbert taking off her hat She said, I guess you're hungry We were late today We went the Log Hollow road it's rougher than ever Her pale mouth drooped with a sad fold on either side

I guess you saw the Mannings, then, said Herbert

Yes, and the Fergusons, and the Allbrights and that new family McClellan

Anybody say anything? asked Herbert

Nothing much, you know how it's been all along some of them keeps saying yes, they know it was a clear case and a fair trial and they say how glad they are your papa came out so well, and all that, some of 'em do, anyhow, but it looks like they don't really take sides with him I'm about wore out, she said, the tears rolling again from under her dark glasses I don't know what good it does, but your papa can't seem to rest unless he's telling how it happened I don't know

'I don't think it does any good, not a speck,' said Arthur, moving away from the stove. It just keeps the whole question stirred up in people's minds. Everybody will go round telling what he heard and the whole thing is going to get worse mixed up than ever. It just makes matters worse. I wish you could get Papa to stop driving round the country talking like that.

Your papa knows best, said Mrs. Thompson. You oughtn't to criticize him. He's got enough to put up with without that.

Arthur said nothing, his jaw stubborn. Mr. Thompson came in, his eyes hollowed out and dead looking, his thick hands gray white and seamed from washing them clean every day before he started out to see the neighbors to tell them his side of the story. He was wearing his Sunday clothes, a thick pepper-and-salt-colored suit with a black string tie.

Mrs. Thompson stood up, her head swimming. Now you-all get out of the kitchen, it's too hot in here and I need room. I'll get us a little bite of supper, if you'll just get out and give me some room.

They went as if they were glad to go, the boys outside, Mr. Thompson into his bedroom. She heard him groaning to himself as he took off his shoes and heard the bed creak as he lay down. Mrs. Thompson opened the icebox and felt the sweet coldness flow out of it, she had never expected to have an icebox, much less did she hope to afford to keep it filled with ice. It still seemed like a miracle, after two or three years. There was the food, cold and clean, all ready to be warmed over. She would never have had that icebox if Mr. Helton hadn't happened along one day, just by the strangest luck, so saving, and so managing, so good, thought Mrs. Thompson, her heart swelling until she feared she would faint again, standing there with the door open and leaning her head upon it. She simply could not bear to remember Mr. Helton, with his long sad face and silent ways, who had always been so quiet and harmless, who had worked so hard and helped Mr. Thompson so much, running through the hot fields and woods, being hunted like a mad dog, everybody turning out with ropes and guns and sticks to catch and tie him. Oh, God, said Mrs. Thompson in a long dry moan, kneeling before the icebox and fumbling inside for the dishes, even if they did pile mattresses all

over the jail floor and against the walls, and five men there to hold him to keep him from hurting himself any more, he was already hurt too badly, he couldn't have lived anyway. Mr. Barbee, the sheriff, told her about it. He said, well, they didn't aim to harm him but they had to catch him, he was crazy as a loon, he picked up rocks and tried to brain every man that got near him. He had two harmonicas in his jumper pocket, said the sheriff, but they fell out in the scuffle, and Mr. Helton tried to pick 'em up again, and that's when they finally got him. They *had* to be rough. Mrs. Thompson, he fought like a wildcat. Yes, thought Mrs. Thompson again with the same bitterness of course, they had to be rough. They always have to be rough. Mr. Thompson can't argue with a man and get him off the place peaceably, no, she thought, standing up and shutting the icebox, he has to kill somebody, he has to be a murderer and ruin his boys' lives and cause Mr. Helton to be killed like a mad dog.

Her thoughts stopped with a little soundless explosion, cleared and began again. The rest of Mr. Helton's harmonics were still in the shack, his tune ran in Mrs. Thompson's head at certain times of the day. She missed it in the evenings. It seemed so strange she had never known the name of that song nor what it meant, until after Mr. Helton was gone. Mrs. Thompson, trembling in the knees, took a drink of water at the sink and poured the red beans into the baking dish, and began to roll the pieces of chicken in flour to fry them. There was a time, she said to herself, when I thought I had neighbors and friends, there was a time when we could hold up our heads, there was a time when my husband hadn't killed a man and I could tell the truth to anybody about anything.

Mr. Thompson, turning on his bed, figured that he had done all he could, he'd just try to let the matter rest from now on. His lawyer, Mr. Burleigh, had told him right at the beginning, Now you keep calm and collected. You've got a fine case, even if you haven't got witnesses. Your wife must sit in court, she'll be a powerful argument with the jury. You just plead not guilty and I'll do the rest. The trial is going to be a mere formality, you haven't got a thing to worry about. You'll be clean out of this before you

know it And to make talk Mr Burleigh had got to telling about all the men he knew around the country who for one reason or another had been forced to kill somebody, always in self defense, and there just wasn't anything to it at all He even told about how his own father in the old days had shot and killed a man just for setting foot inside his gate when he told him not to Sure, I shot the scoundrel, said Mr Burleigh's father, in self defense, I *told* him I'd shoot him if he set his foot in my yard, and he did, and I did There had been bad blood between them for years Mr Burleigh said, and his father had waited a long time to catch the other fellow in the wrong and when he did he certainly made the most of his opportunity

But Mr Hatch, as I told you Mr Thompson had said, made a pass at Mr Helton with his bowie knife That's why I took a hand

All the better, said Mr Burleigh "That stranger hadn't any right coming to your house on such an errand Why, hell, said Mr Burleigh, that wasn't even manslaughter you committed So now you just hold your horses and keep your shirt on And don't say one word without I tell you

Wasn't even manslaughter Mr Thompson had to cover Mr Hatch with a piece of wagon canvas and ride to town to tell the sheriff It had been hard on Ellie When they got back the sheriff and the coroner and two deputies, they found her sitting beside the road, on a low bridge over a gulley, about half a mile from the place He had taken her up behind his saddle and got her back to the house He had already told the sheriff that his wife had witnessed the whole business, and now he had time, getting her to her room and in bed, to tell her what to say if they asked anything He had left out the part about Mr Helton being crazy all along, but it came out at the trial By Mr Burleigh's advice Mr Thompson had pretended to be perfectly ignorant, Mr Hatch hadn't said a word about that Mr Thompson pretended to believe that Mr Hatch had just come looking for Mr Helton to settle old scores and the two members of Mr Hatch's family who had come down to try to get Mr Thompson convicted didn't get anywhere at all It hadn't been much of a trial, Mr Burleigh saw to that He had charged a reasonable fee, and Mr Thompson had

paid him and felt grateful, but after it was over Mr Burleigh didn't seem pleased to see him when he got to dropping into the office to talk it over, telling him things that had slipped his mind at first trying to explain what an ornery low hound Mr Hatch had been, anyhow Mr Burleigh seemed to have lost his interest he looked sour and upset when he saw Mr Thompson at the door Mr Thompson kept saying to himself that he'd got off, all right, just as Mr Burleigh had predicted, but, but—and it was right there that Mr Thompson's mind stuck, squirming like an angle worm on a fishhook he had killed Mr Hatch and he was a murderer That was the truth about himself that Mr Thompson couldn't grasp, even when he said the word to himself Why, he had not even once *thought* of killing anybody, much less Mr Hatch, and if Mr Helton hadn't come out so unexpectedly hearing the row, why, then—but then, Mr Helton had come on the run that way to help him What he couldn't understand was what happened next He had seen Mr Hatch go after Mr Helton with the knife, he had seen the point, blade up, go into Mr Helton's stomach and slice up like you slice a hog, but when they finally caught Mr Helton there wasn't a knife scratch on him Mr Thompson knew he had the ax in his own hands and felt himself lifting it but he couldn't remember hitting Mr Hatch He couldn't remember it He couldn't He remembered only that he had been determined to stop Mr Hatch from cutting Mr Helton If he was given a chance he could explain the whole matter At the trial they hadn't let him talk They just asked questions and he answered yes or no, and they never did get to the core of the matter Since the trial, now, every day for a week he had washed and shaved and put on his best clothes and had taken Ellie with him to tell every neighbor he had that he never killed Mr Hatch on purpose, and what good did it do? Nobody believed him Even when he turned to Ellie and said, You was there, you saw it, didn't you? and Ellie spoke up, saying, Yes, that's the truth Mr Thompson was trying to save Mr Helton's life, and he added If you don't believe me you can believe my wife She won't lie, Mr Thompson saw something in all their faces that disheartened him, made him feel empty and tired out They didn't believe he was not a murderer

Even Ellie never said anything to comfort him. He hoped she would say finally, I remember now, Mr. Thompson, I really did come round the corner in time to see everything. It's not a lie, Mr. Thompson. Don't you worry. But as they drove together in silence, with the days still hot and dry, shortening for fall, day after day the buggy jolting in the ruts she said nothing, they grew to dread the sight of another house, and the people in it. All houses looked alike now, and the people—old neighbors or new—had the same expression when Mr. Thompson told them why he had come and began his story. Their eyes looked as if someone had pinched the eyeball at the back; they shriveled and the light went out of them. Some of them sat with fixed tight smiles trying to be friendly. Yes, Mr. Thompson, we know how you must feel. It must be terrible for you, Mrs. Thompson. Yes you know, I've about come to the point where I believe in such a thing as killing in self defense. Why, certainly, we believe you, Mr. Thompson, why shouldn't we believe you? Didn't you have a perfectly fair and above board trial? Well now, natchally, Mr. Thompson, we think you done right.

Mr. Thompson was satisfied they didn't think so. Sometimes the air around him was so thick with their blame he fought and pushed with his fists and the sweat broke out all over him, he shouted his story in a dust choked voice he would fairly bellow at last, My wife, here you know her, she was there she saw and heard it all, if you don't believe me, ask her, she won't lie! and Mrs. Thompson with her hands knotted together, aching, her chin trembling, would never fail to say Yes, that's right, that's the truth—

The last straw had been laid on today, Mr. Thompson decided. Tom Allbright, an old beau of Ellie's, why he had squired Ellie around a whole summer had come out to meet them when they drove up, and standing there bareheaded had stopped them from getting out. He had looked past them with an embarrassed frown on his face, telling them his wife's sister was there with a raft of young ones, and the house was pretty full and every thing upset, or he'd ask them to come in. We've been thinking of trying to get up to your place one of these days, said Mr. Allbright, moving away trying to look busy, we've been mighty oc-

cupied up here of late So they had to say, Well, we just happened to be driving this way, and go on The Allbrights, said Mrs Thompson, always was fair weather friends They look out for number one, that's a fact, said Mr Thompson But it was cold comfort to them both

Finally Mrs Thompson had given up Let's go home she said Old Jim's tired and thirsty and we've gone far enough

Mr Thompson said, "Well, while we're out this way we might as well stop at the McClellans They drove in, and asked a little cotton-haired boy if his mamma and papa were at home Mr Thompson wanted to see them The little boy stood gazing with his mouth open, then galloped into the house shouting, Mommer, Popper, come out hyah That man that kilt Mr Hatch has come ter see yer!

The man came out in his sock feet with one gallus up, the other broken and dangling, and said Light down, Mr Thompson, and come in The ole woman's washing but shell git here Mrs Thompson, feeling her way, stepped down and sat in a broken rocking chair on the porch that sagged under her feet The woman of the house, barefooted, in a calico wrapper, sat on the edge of the porch, her fat sallow face full of curiosity Mr Thompson began, Well, as I reckon you happen to know, I've had some strange troubles lately, and, as the feller says it's not the kind of trouble that happens to a man every day in the year, and there's some things I don't want no misunderstanding about in the neighbors' minds, so—— He halted and stumbled forward, and the two listening faces took on a mean look, a greedy despising look, a look that said plain as day, My you must be a purty sorry feller to come round worrying about what *we* think, *we* know you wouldn't be here if you had anybody else to turn to—— my I wouldn't lower myself that much myself Mr Thompson was ashamed of himself, he was suddenly in a rage he'd like to knock their dirty skunk heads together, the low-down white trash—but he held himself down and went on to the end My wife will tell you, he said, and this was the hardest place because Ellie always without moving a muscle seemed to stiffen as if somebody had threatened to hit her, ask my wife, she won't lie

It's true, I saw it——

Well, now, said the man, duly, scratching his ribs inside his shirt, that sholy is too bad Well, now I kaint see what we've got to do with all this here, however I kaint see no good reason for us to git mixed up in these murder matters I shore kaint Which-ever way you look at it it ain't none of my business However it's mighty nice of you all to come around and give us the straight of it, fur we've heerd some mighty queer yarns about it, mighty queer, I golly you couldn't hardly make head nor tail of it

Evvybody goin' round shootin' they heads off, said the woman Now we don't hold with killin', the Bible says——

Shet yer trap, said the man, and keep it shet r I'll shet it fer yer Now it shore looks like to me——

We mustn't linger, said Mrs Thompson, unclasping her hands We've lingered too long now It's getting late, and we've far to go Mr Thompson took the hint and followed her The man and the woman lolled against their rickety porch poles and watched them go

Now lying on his bed, Mr Thompson knew the end had come Now, this minute, lying in the bed where he had slept with Ellie for eighteen years, under this roof where he had laid the shingles when he was waiting to get married, there as he was with his whiskers already sprouting since his shave that morning with his fingers feeling his bony chin Mr Thompson felt he was a dead man He was dead to his other life, he had got to the end of some thing without knowing why, and he had to make a fresh start, he did not know how Something different was going to begin he didn't know what It was in some way not his business He didn't feel he was going to have much to do with it He got up, aching, hollow, and went out to the kitchen where Mrs Thompson was just taking up the supper

Call the boys said Mrs Thompson They had been down to the barn, and Arthur put out the lantern before hanging it on a nail near the door Mr Thompson didn't like their silence They had hardly said a word about anything to him since that day They seemed to avoid him, they ran the place together as if he wasn't there, and attended to everything without asking him for

any advice What you boys been up to? he asked, trying to be hearty Finishing your chores?

No su, said Arthur, there ain't much to do Just greasing some axles Herbert said nothing Miss Thompson bowed her head

For these and all Thy blessings Amen, she whispered weakly, and the Thompsons sat there with their eyes down and their faces sorrowful, as if they were at a funeral

Every time he shut his eyes, trying to sleep, Mr Thompson's mind started up and began to run like a rabbit It jumped from one thing to another, trying to pick up a trail here or there that would straighten out what had happened that day he killed Mr Hatch Try as he might, Mr Thompson's mind would not go any where that it had not already been, he could not see anything but what he had seen once, and he knew that was not right If he had not seen straight that first time, then everything about his killing Mr Hatch was wrong from start to finish, and there was nothing more to be done about it he might just as well give up It still seemed to him that he had done, maybe not the right thing, but the only thing he could do, that day but had he? *Did he have to kill Mr Hatch?* He had never seen a man he hated more the minute he laid eyes on him He knew in his bones the fellow was there for trouble What seemed so funny now was this Why hadn't he just told Mr Hatch to get out before he ever even got in?

Mrs Thompson, her arms crossed on her breast was lying beside him, perfectly still but she seemed awake, somehow Asleep, Ellie?

After all, he might have got rid of him peaceably, or maybe he might have had to overpower him and put those handcuffs on him and turn him over to the sheriff for disturbing the peace The most they could have done was to lock Mr Hatch up while he cooled off for a few days or fine him a little something He would try to think of things he might have said to Mr Hatch Why, let's see, I could just have said Now look here, Mr Hatch, I want to talk to you as man to man But his brain would go empty What could he have said or done? But if he *could* have done anything else almost except kill Mr Hatch, then nothing would have happened to Mr Helton Mr Thompson hardly ever thought of Mr Helton His

mind just skipped over him and went on. If he stopped to think about Mr. Helton he'd never in God's world get anywhere. He tried to imagine how it might all have been, this very night even if Mr. Helton were still safe and sound out in his shack playing his tune about feeling so good in the morning drinking up all the wine so you'd feel even better and Mr. Hutch safe in jail somewhere, mad as hops, maybe but out of harm's way and ready to listen to reason and to repent of his meanness, the duty yellow livered hound coming around persecuting an innocent man and running a whole family that never harmed him! Mr. Thompson felt the veins of his forehead start up, his fists clutched as if they seized an ax handle. The sweat broke out on him, he bounded up from the bed with a yell smothered in his throat, and Ellie started up after him, crying out, Oh, oh don't! Don't! Don't! as if she were having a nightmare. He stood shaking until his bones rattled in him, crying hoarsely, Light the lamp, light the lamp, Ellie.

Instead, Mrs. Thompson gave a shrill weak scream, almost the same scream he had heard on that day she came around the house when he was standing there with the ax in his hand. He could not see her in the dark but she was on the bed, rolling violently. He felt for her in horror, and his groping hands found her arms, up, and her own hands pulling her hair straight out from her head. Her neck strained back, and the tight screams strangling her. He shouted out for Arthur, for Herbert. Your mother! he bawled, his voice cracking. As he held Mrs. Thompson's arms, the boys came tumbling in. Arthur with the lamp above his head. By this light Mr. Thompson saw Mrs. Thompson's eyes, wide open, staring dreadfully at him, the tears pouring. She sat up at sight of the boys, and held out one arm towards them, the hand wagging in a crazy circle, then dropped on her back again, and suddenly went limp. Arthur set the lamp on the table and turned on Mr. Thompson. She's scared, he said, she's scared to death. His face was in a knot of rage, his fists were doubled up, he faced his father as if he meant to strike him. Mr. Thompson's jaw fell, he was so surprised he stepped back from the bed. Herbert went to the other side. They stood on each side of Mrs. Thompson and watched Mr. Thompson as if he were a dangerous wild beast. What did you do to her? shouted Arthur, in a grown man's

voice You touch her again and I'll blow your heart out!' Herbert was pale and his cheek twitched, but he was on Arthur's side he would do what he could to help Arthur

Mr Thompson had no fight left in him His knees bent as he stood, his chest collapsed Why Arthur he said his words crumbling and his breath coming short She's fainted again Get the ammonia Arthur did not move Herbert brought the bottle, and handed it, shrinking to his father

Mr Thompson held it under Mrs Thompson's nose He poured a little in the palm of his hand and rubbed it on her forehead She gasped and opened her eyes and turned her head away from him Herbert began a doleful hopeless sniffing Mamma, he kept saying, Mamma don't die

I'm all right Mrs Thompson said Now don't you worry around Now Herbert you mustn't do that I'm all right She closed her eyes Mr Thompson began pulling on his best pants, he put on his socks and shoes The boys sat on each side of the bed, watching Mrs Thompson's face Mr Thompson put on his shirt and coat He said I reckon I'll ride over and get the doctor Don't look like all this fainting is a good sign Now you just keep watch until I get back They listened, but said nothing He said

Don't you get any notions in your head I never did your mother any harm in my life on purpose He went out and, looking back, saw Herbert staring at him from under his brows, like a stranger You'll know how to look after her, said Mr Thompson

Mr Thompson went through the kitchen There he lighted the lantern took a thin pad of scratch paper and a stub pencil from the shelf where the boys kept their schoolbooks He swung the lantern on his arm and reached into the cupboard where he kept the guns The shotgun was there to his hand, primed and ready a man never knows when he may need a shotgun He went out of the house without looking around, or looking back when he had left it, passed his barn without seeing it and struck out to the farthest end of his fields which ran for half a mile to the east So many blows had been struck at Mr Thompson and from so many directions he couldn't stop any more to find out where he was hit He walked on, over plowed ground and over meadow, going through barbed wire fences cautiously, putting his gun through

first, he could almost see in the dark, now his eyes were used to it. Finally he came to the last fence here he sat down, back against a post lantern at his side and with the pad on his knee, moistened the stub pencil and began to write.

Before Almighty God, the great judge of all before who I am about to appear I do hereby solemnly swear that I did not take the life of Mr. Homer T. Hatch on purpose. It was done in defense of Mr. Helton. I did not aim to hit him with the ax but only to keep him off Mr. Helton. He aimed a blow at Mr. Helton who was not looking for it. It was my belief at the time that Mr. Hatch would of taken the life of Mr. Helton if I did not interfere. I have told all this to the judge and the jury and they let me off but nobody believes it. This is the only way I can prove I am not a cold blooded murderer like everybody seems to think. If I had been in Mr. Helton's place he would of done the same for me. I still think I done the only thing there was to do. My wife—

Mr. Thompson stopped here to think a while. He wet the pencil point with the tip of his tongue and marked out the last two words. He sat a while blacking out the words until he had made a neat oblong patch where they had been and started again.

It was Mr. Homer T. Hatch who came to do wrong to a humbler man. He caused all this trouble and he deserved to die but I am sorry it was me who had to kill him.

He licked the point of his pencil again and signed his full name carefully, folded the paper and put it in his outside pocket. Taking off his right shoe and sock, he set the butt of the shotgun along the ground with the twin barrels pointed towards his head. It was very awkward. He thought about this a little, leaning his head against the gun mouth. He was trembling and his head was drumming until he was deaf and blind but he lay down flat on the earth on his side, drew the barrel under his chin and fumbled for the trigger with his great toe. That way he could work it.

HERMAN MELVILLE



Billy Budd, Foretopman

WHAT BEFELL HIM IN THE YEAR
OF THE GREAT MUTINY, ETC

Begun—Friday November 16 1888

Revision Begun—March 2, 1889

Finished—April 19, 1891



DEDICATED TO

JACK CHASE

Englshman

WHEREVER THAT GREAT HEART MAY NOW BE
HERE ON EARTH OR HARBOURED IN PARA-
DISE CAPTAIN OF THE MAINTOP IN THE YEAR
1843 IN THE U S FRIGATE UNITED STATES

PREFACE

The year 1797 the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which, as every thinker now feels, involved a crisis for Christendom not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age * involved rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs. In France, to some extent this was bloodily effected. But what then? Straightway the Revolution itself became a wrongdoer, one more oppressive than the kings. Under Napoleon it enthroned upstart kings, and initiated that prolonged agony of continual war whose final throes was Waterloo. During those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be—a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.

Now, as elsewhere hinted it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit that at Spithead emboldened the man-of-war's men to rise against real abuses, long standing ones, and afterwards at the Nore to make inordinate and aggressive demands—successful resistance to which was confirmed only when the ringleaders were hung for an admonitory spectacle to the anchored fleet. Yet in a way analogous to the operation of the Revolution at large—the Great Mutiny, though by Englishmen naturally deemed monstrous at the time, doubtless gave the first latent prompting to most important reforms in the British navy.

* Crossed out was one hailed by the noblest men of it. Even the dry tinder of a Wordsworth tool fire.

CHAPTER I

(An inside narrative)

In the time before steamships or then more frequently than now, a stroller along the docks of any considerable seaport would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed mainmains, man of war's men or merchant sailors in holiday attire ashore on liberty. In certain instances they would flank, or, like a bodyguard, quite surround some superior figure of their own class, moving along with them like Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation. That signal object was the Handsome Sailor of the less prosaic time, alike of the military and merchant navies. With no perceptible trace of the vainglorious about him, rather with the off hand unaffectedness of natural regality, he seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates. A somewhat remarkable instance recurs to me. In Liverpool, now half a century ago I saw under the shadow of the great dingy street wall of Prince's Dock (an obstruction long since removed) a common sailor, so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham. A symmetric figure, much above the average in height. The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest, in his ears were big hoops of gold, and a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band set off his shapely head.

It was a hot noon in July, and his face, lustrous with perspiration, beamed with barbaric good humour. In jovial sallies right and left, his white teeth flashing into view, he rollicked along, the centre of a company of his shipmates. These were made up of such an assortment of tribes and complexions as would have well fitted them to be marched up by Anacharsis Clootz before the bar of the first French Assembly as Representatives of the Human Race. At each spontaneous tribute rendered by the wayfarers to this black pagod of a fellow—the tribute of a pause and stare, and less frequent an exclamation—the motley retinue showed that

they took that sort of pride in the evoker of it which the Assyrian priests doubtless showed for their grand sculptured Bull when the faithful prostrated themselves To return—

If in some cases a bit of a nautical Mutat in setting forth his person ashore, the Handsome Sailor of the period in question evinced nothing of the dandified Billy be Damn—an amusing character all but extinct now, but occasionally to be encountered, and in a form yet more amusing than the original, at the tiller of the boats on the tempestuous Erie Canal or, more likely vapouring in the grogeries along the tow path Invariably a proficient in his perilous calling he was also more or less of a mighty boxer or wrestler It was strength and beauty Tales of his prowess were recited Ashore he was the champion, afloat the spokesman, on every suitable occasion always foremost Close reefing topsails in a gale, there he was—astide the weather yard arm end foot in stirrup both hands tugging at the ear ring as at a bridle, in very much the attitude of the young Alexander curbing the fiery Bucephalus A superb figure tossed up as by the horns of Taurus against the thunderous sky, cheerily ballooning to the strenuous file along the spar

The moral nature was seldom out of keeping with the physical make Indeed, except as toned by the former, the comeliness and power, always attractive in masculine perfection, hardly could have drawn the sort of homage the Handsome Sailor in some examples, received from his less gifted associates

Such a cynosure, at least in aspect, and something such too in nature though with important variations made apparent as the story proceeds, was welkin eyed Billy Budd, or Baby Budd—as more familiarly, under circumstances here after to be given, he at last came to be called—aged twenty one, a foretopman of the fleet towards the close of the last decade of the eighteenth century It was not very long prior to the time of the narration that follows, that he had entered the King's Service, having been impressed on the Narrow Seas from a homeward bound English merchantman into a seventy four outward bound, H M S *Indomitable*, which ship, as was not unusual in those hurried days had been obliged to put to sea short of her proper complement of men Plump upon Billy at first sight in the gangway the boarding officer, Lieutenant

Ratchffe, pounced, even before the merchantmen's crew formally was mustered on the quarter deck for his deliberate inspection. And him only he elected. For whether it was because the other men when ranged before him showed to ill advantage after Billy, or whether he had some scruples in view of the merchantman being rather short handed, however it might be, the officer contented himself with his first spontaneous choice. To the surprise of the ship's company, though much to the Lieutenant's satisfaction, Billy made no demur. But indeed any demur would have been as idle as the protest of a goldfinch popped into a cage.

Noting this uncomplaining acquiescence, all but cheerful one might say, the shipmates turned a surprised glance of silent reproach at the sailor. The shipmaster was one of those worthy mortals found in every vocation,—even the humbler ones,—the sort of person whom everybody agrees in calling a respectable man. And—nor so strange to report as it may appear to be—though a ploughman of the troubled waters, life long contending with the intractable elements, there was nothing in this honest soul at heart loved better than simple peace and quiet. For the rest, he was fifty or thereabouts, a little inclined to corpulence, a prepossessing face, unwhiskered, and of an agreeable colour—a rather full face, humanely intelligent in expression. On a fair day with a fair wind and all going well, a certain musical chime in his voice seemed to be the veritable unobstructed outcome of the innermost man. He had much prudence, much conscientiousness, and there were occasions when these virtues were the cause of overmuch disquietude in him. On a passage, so long as his craft was in any proximity to land, there was no sleep for Captain Graveling. He took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some shipmasters.

Now, while Billy Budd was down in the fore-castle, getting his kit together, the *Indomitable's* Lieutenant—burly and bluff, notwithstanding—was disconcerted by Captain Graveling's omitting to proffer the customary hospitalities on an occasion so unwelcome to him, an omission simply caused by preoccupation of thought—unceremoniously invited himself into the cabin, and also to a flask from the spirit locker, a receptacle which his experienced eye instantly discovered. In fact, he was one of those sea dogs in whom all the

hardship and peril of naval life in the great prolonged wars of his time never impaired the natural instinct for sensuous enjoyment. His duty he always faithfully did, but duty is sometimes a dry obligation, and he was for irrigating its aridity whensoever possible with a fertilizing decoction of strong waters. For the cabin's proprietor there was nothing left but to play the part of the enforced host with whatever grace and alacrity were practicable. As necessary adjuncts to the flask he silently placed tumblers and water-jug before the irrepressible guest. But excusing himself from partaking just then, he dismally watched the unembarrassed officer deliberately diluting his grog a little, then tossing it off in three swallows, pushing the empty tumbler away, yet not so far as to be beyond easy reach, at the same time settling himself in his seat and smacking his lips with high satisfaction, looking straight at the host.

These proceedings over the Master broke the silence, and there lurked a rueful reproach in the tone of his voice. Lieutenant, you are going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em.

Yes, I know, rejoined the other, immediately drawing back the tumbler preliminary to a replenishing. Yes, I know. Sorry.

Beg pardon, but you don't understand, Lieutenant. See here now. Before I shipped that young fellow, my fore-castle was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times. I tell you aboard the *Rights* here I was worried to that degree my pipe had no comfort for me. But Billy came, and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular, but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones. They took to him like hornets to treacle, all but the bluffer of the gang, the big shaggy chap with the fire-red whiskers. He, indeed, out of envy perhaps of the newcomer, and thinking such a sweet and pleasant fellow, as he mockingly designated him to the others, could hardly have the spirit of a game cock, must needs bestir himself in trying to get up an ugly row with him. Billy forbore with him and reasoned with him in a pleasant way—he is something like myself, Lieutenant, to whom ought like a quarrel is hateful—but nothing served. So, in the second dog watch one day the Red Whiskers, in the presence of

the others, under pretence of showing Billy just whence a sirloin steak was cut—for the fellow had once been a butcher—insultingly gave him a dig under the ribs. Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm. I dare say he never meant to do quite as much as he did, but anyhow he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing. It took about half a minute, I should think. And, Lord bless you, the lubber was astonished at the celerity. And will you believe it, Lieutenant, the Red Whiskers now really loves Billy—loves him, or is the biggest hypocrite that ever I heard of. But they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn old trousers for him, the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd, and it's the happy family here. Now, Lieutenant, if that young fellow goes—I know how it will be aboard the *Rights*. Not again very soon shall I, coming up from dinner, lean over the capstan smoking a quiet pipe—no, not very soon again, I think. Ay, Lieutenant, you are going to take away the jewel of 'em, you are going to take away my peacemaker. And with that the good soul had really some ado in checking a rising sob.

Well, answered the Lieutenant, who had listened with amused interest to all this, and now waxing merry with his tipple, Well, blessed are the peacemakers, especially the fighting peacemakers! And such are the seventy-four beauties, some of which you see poking their noses out of the port holes of yonder war-ship lying to there for me, pointing through the cabin window at the *Indomitable*. But courage! don't look so down-hearted, man. Why, I pledge you in advance the royal approbation. Rest assured that His Majesty will be delighted to know that in a time when his hard tack is not sought for by sailors with such avidity as should be, a time also when some shipmasters privily resent the borrowing from them of a tar or two for the service, His Majesty, I say, will be delighted to learn that *one* shipmaster, at least, cheerfully surrenders to the King the flower of his flock, a sailor who with equal loyalty makes no dissent.—But where's my beauty? Ah, looking through the cabin's open door. Here he comes, and, by Jove—lugging along his chest—Apollo with his portmanteau! My man, stepping out to him, you can't take that

big box on board a war ship The boxes there are mostly shot boxes Put up your duds in a bag, lad Boot and saddle for the cavalryman, bag and hammock for the man-of-war's man'

The transfer from chest to bag was made And, after seeing his man into the cutter, and then following him down, the Lieutenant pushed off from the *Rights-of Man* That was the merchantship's name, though by her master and crew abbreviated in sailor fashion into the *Rights* The hard-headed Dundee owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine, whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time and had gone everywhere In christening his vessel after the title of Paine's volume, the man of Dundee was something like his contemporary shipowner, Stephen Guard of Philadelphia, whose sympathies alike with his native land and its liberal philosophies he evinced by naming his ships after Voltaire, Diderot and so forth

But now, when the boat swept under the merchantman's stern, and officer and oarsmen were noting—some bitterly and others with a grin—the name emblazoned there, just then it was that the new recruit jumped up from the bow where the coxswain had directed him to sit, waving his hat to his silent shipmates sorrowfully looking over at him from the taffail, and bade the lads a genial good-bye Then making a salutation as to the ship herself, And good-bye to you too, old *Rights-of Man*!

Down, Sir, roared the Lieutenant instantly assuming all the rigour of his rank, though with difficulty repressing a smile

To be sure Billy's action was a terrible breach of naval decorum But in that decorum he had never been instructed, in consideration of which the Lieutenant would hardly have been so energetic in reproof but for the concluding farewell to the ship This he rather took as meant to convey a covert sally on the new recruit's part—a sly slur at impressment in general, and that of himself in especial And yet, more likely if satire it was in effect it was hardly so by intention for Billy (though happily endowed with the gaiety of high health, youth and a free heart) was yet by no means of a satirical turn The will to it and the sinister dexterity were alike wanting To deal in double meaning and insinuations of any sort was quite foreign to his nature

As to his enforced enlistment—that he seemed to take pretty much as he was wont to take any vicissitude of weather. Like the animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist. And, it may be that he rather liked this adventurous turn in his affairs which promised an opening into novel scenes and martial excitements.

Aboard the *Indomitable* our merchant sailor was forthwith rated as an able seaman, and assigned to the starboard-watch of the foretop. He was soon at home in the service, not at all disliked for his unpretentious good looks and his rather genial happy-go-lucky air. No merrier man in his mess, in marked contrast to certain other individuals included like himself among the impressed portions of the ship's company, for these when not actively employed were sometimes—and more particularly in the last dog-watch, when the drawing near of twilight induced revery—apt to fall into a sardonic mood which in some partook of sullenness. But they were not so young as our foretopman, and no few of them must have known a hearth of some sort; others may have had wives and children left too probably, in uncertain circumstances, and hardly any but must have acknowledged kith and kin, while for Billy, as will shortly be seen, his entire family was practically invested in himself.

CHAPTER II

Though our new-made foretopman was well received in the top and on the gun decks, hardly here was he that cynosure he had previously been among those minor ship's companies of the merchant marine, with which companies only had he hitherto consorted.

He was young, and despite his all-but fully developed frame, in aspect looked even younger than he really was. This was owing to a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face—all but feminine in purity of natural complexion, but where, thanks to his seagoing, the lily was quite suppressed and the rose had some ado visibly to flush through the tan.

To one essentially such a novice in the complexities of factitious life, the abrupt transition from his former and simpler sphere

to the ampler and more knowing world of a great war ship—this might well have abashed him had there been any conceit or vanity in his composition. Among her miscellaneous multitude, the *Indomitable* mustered several individuals who, however inferior in grade, were of no common natural stamp: sailors more signally susceptible of that air which continuous martial discipline and repeated presence in battle can in some degree impart even to the average man. As the Handsome Sailor Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the high born dames of the court. But this change of circumstances he scarce noted. As little did he observe that something about him provoked an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the blue jackets. Nor less unaware was he of the peculiar favourable effect his person and demeanour had upon the more intelligent gentlemen of the quarter deck. Nor could this well have been otherwise. Cast in a mould peculiar to the finest physical examples of those Englishmen in whom the Saxon strain would seem not at all to partake of any Norman or other admixture, he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man, Hercules. But this again was subtly modified by another and pervasive quality. The ear, small and shapely, the arch of the foot, the curve in mouth and nostril, even the indwelt hand dived to the orange tawny of the toucan's bill, a hand telling of the halvyards and tar-buckets. But, above all, something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favoured by Love and the Graces, all this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot. The mysteriousness here became less mysterious through a matter of fact elicited when Billy at the capstan was being formally mustered into the service. Asked by the officer, a small brisk little gentleman as it chanced, among other questions, his place of birth, he replied, Please, Sir, I don't know.

Don't know where you were born? Who was your father?

God knows, Sir.

Struck by the straightforward simplicity of these replies, the

officer next asked Do you know anything about your beginning?

No, Sir But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silk lined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man's door in Bristol

Found say you? Well, throwing back his head and looking up and down the new recruit well it turns out to have been a pretty good find I hope they'll find some more like you, my man, the fleet sadly needs them

Yes, Billy Budd was a foundling, a presumable by-blow, and, evidently, no ignoble one Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse

For the rest with little or no sharpness of faculty or any trace of the wisdom of the serpent, nor yet quite a dove he possessed that kind and degree of intelligence which goes along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human creature—one to whom not as yet had been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge He was illiterate He could not read but he could sing and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song

Of self consciousness he seemed to have little or none, or about as much as we may reasonably impute to a dog of St Bernard's breed

Habitually being with the elements and knowing little more of the land than as a beach or rather, that portion of the terraqueous globe, providentially set apart for dance-houses, doxies and tapsters, in short what sailors call a fiddler's green, his simple nature remained unsophisticated by those moral obliquities which are not in every case incompatible with that manufacturable thing known as respectability But are sailors, frequenters of fiddler's greens without vices? No, but less often than with landmen do their vices, so called, partake of crookedness of heart, seeming less to proceed from viciousness than from exuberance of vitality after long restraint, frank manifestations in accordance with natural law By his original constitution aided by the co-operating influences of his lot, Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company

And here be it submitted that, apparently going to corroborate the doctrine of man's fall—a doctrine now popularly ignored—it is observable that where certain virtues pristine and unadulterate peculiarly characterize anybody in the external uniform of civilization, they will upon scrutiny seem not to be derived from custom or convention but rather to be out of keeping with these, as if indeed exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain's City and civilized man. The character marked by such qualities has to an inviolated taste an untampered with flavour like that of berries while the man thoroughly civilized, even in a fair specimen of the breed, has to the same moral palate a questionable smack as of a compounded wine. To any stray inheritor of these primitive qualities found, like Caspar Hauser wandering dazed in any Christian capital of our time, the poet's famous invocation, near two thousand years ago, of the good rustic out of his latitude in the Rome of the Cæsars, still appropriately holds —

*Faithful in word and thought
What has Thee Fabian to the city brought*

Though our Handsome Sailor had as much of masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see, nevertheless like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne's minor tales, there was just one thing amiss in him. No visible blemish, indeed, as with the lady no, but an occasional liability to a vocal defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be yet under sudden provocation of strong heart feeling his voice, otherwise singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy,—in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interpreter, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us—I too have a hand here.

The avowal of such an imperfection in the Handsome Sailor should be evidence not alone that he is not presented as a con-

ventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance

CHAPTER III

At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the *Indomitable* that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. No long time elapsed before the junction was effected. As one of that fleet the seventy-four participated in its movements, though at times on account of her superior sailing qualities, in the absence of frigates, despatched on separate duty as a scout—and at times on less temporary service. But with all this the story has little concernment restricted as it is to the inner life of one particular ship and the career of an individual sailor.

It was the summer of 1797. In April of that year had occurred the commotion of Spithead followed in May by a second and yet more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore. The latter is known, and without exaggeration in the epithet as the Great Mutiny. It was indeed a demonstration more menacing to England than the contemporary manifestoes and conquering and proselyting armies of the French Directory.

To the Empire the Nore Mutiny was what a strike in the fire brigade would be to London threatened by general arson. In a crisis when the Kingdom might well have anticipated the famous signal that some years later published along the naval line of battle what it was that upon occasion England expected of Englishmen—that was the time when at the mastheads of the three-deckers and seventy-fours moored in our own roadstead—a fleet, the right arm of a Power then all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World, the blue-jackets, to be numbered by thousands, ran up with hurrahs the British colours with the union and cross wiped out, by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames.

The event converted into irony for a time those spirited strains of Dibdin—as a song writer no mean auxiliary to the English Government—at the European conjuncture strains celebrating among other things, the patriotic devotion of the British tar

And as for my life tis the Kings!

Such an episode in the Islands grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge, one of them (G P R James) candidly acknowledging that fain would he pass it over did not impartiality forbid fastidiousness. And yet his mention is less a narration than a reference, having to do hardly at all with details. Nor are these readily to be found in libraries. Like some other events in every age befalling states everywhere, including America, the Great Mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background. Such events cannot be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. If a well constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family, a nation in the like circumstance may without reproach be equably discreet.

Though after parlevings between Government and the ring leaders and concessions by the former as to some glaring abuses, the first uprising—that at Spithead—with difficulty was put down, or matters for a time pacified yet at the Nore the unforeseen renewal of insurrection on a yet larger scale and emphasized in the conferences that ensued by demands deemed by the authorities not only inadmissible but aggressively insolent, indicated, if the red flag did not sufficiently do so, what was the spirit animating the men. Final suppression, however, there was but only made possible perhaps by the unswerving loyalty of the marine corps, and a voluntary resumption of loyalty among influential sections of the crews. To some extent the Nore Mutiny may be regarded as analogous to the distempering *irruption* of contagious fever in a frame constitutionally sound, and which anon throws it off.

At all events, of these thousands of mutineers were some of the tars who not so very long afterwards—whether wholly prompted thereto by patriotism, or pugnacious instinct, or by both,—helped

to win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile and the naval crown of crowns for him at Trafalgar. To the mutineers those battles, and especially Trafalgar, were a plenary absolution and a grand one, for all that goes to make up scenic naval display is heroic magnificence in arms. Those battles, especially Trafalgar, stand unmatched in human annals.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning *The greatest sailor since the world began* —TENNYSON

In this matter of writing I resolve as one may to keep to the main road: some bypaths have an enticement not readily to be withstood. Beckoned by the genius of Nelson, I am going to err in such a bypath. If the reader will keep me company I shall be glad. At the least we can promise ourselves that pleasure which is wickedly said to be in sinning for a literary sin the divergence will be.

Very likely it is no new remark that the inventions of our time have at last brought about a change in sea warfare in degree corresponding to the revolution in all warfare effected by the original introduction from China into Europe of gunpowder. The first European firearm, a clumsy contrivance, was as is well known, scouted by no few of the knights as a base implement, good enough peradventure for weavers too craven to stand up crossing steel with steel in frank fight. But as ashore knightly valour, though shorn of its blazonry, did not cease with the knights, neither on the seas, though nowadays in encounters there a certain kind of displayed gallantry be fallen out of date as hardly applicable under changed circumstances, did the nobler qualities of such naval magnates as Don John of Austria, Donna, Van Tromp, Jean Bart, the long line of British admirals and the American Decatur of 1812 become obsolete with their wooden walls.

Nevertheless, to anybody who can hold the Present at its worth without being inappreciative of the Past, it may be forgiven, if to such an one the solitary old hulk at Portsmouth, Nelson's *Victory*, seems to float there, not alone as the decaying monument of a fame incorruptible, but also as a poetic reproach, softened

by its picturesqueness, to the *Monitors* and yet mightier hulls of the European ironsides. And this not altogether because such craft are unsightly, unavoidably lacking the symmetry and grand lines of the old battleships but equally for other reasons.

There are some perhaps, who while not altogether inaccessible to that poetic reproach just alluded to, may yet on behalf of the new order be disposed to parry it, and this to the extent of iconoclasm, if need be. For example, prompted by the sight of the star inserted in the *Victory's* deck designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell, these martial utilitarians may suggest considerations implying that Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only unnecessary, but not military, nay, savoured of foolhardiness and vanity. They may add, too, that at Trafalgar it was in effect nothing less than a challenge to death and death came, and that but for his bravado the victorious admiral might possibly have survived the battle, and so, instead of having his sagacious dying injunction overruled by his immediate successor in command, he himself when the contest was decided might have brought his shattered fleet to anchor, a proceeding which might have averted the deplorable loss of life by shipwreck in the elemental tempest that followed the martial one.

Well, should we set aside the more disputable point whether for various reasons it was possible to anchor the fleet then plausibly enough the Benthamites of war may urge the above.

But it *might have been* is but boggy ground to build on. And certainly in foresight as to the larger issue of an encounter, and anxious preparation for it—buoying the deadly way and mapping it out, as at Copenhagen—few commanders have been so painstakingly circumspect as this reckless declarer of his person in fight.

Personal prudence even when dictated by quite other than selfish considerations is surely no special virtue in a military man, while an excessive love of glory exercising to the uttermost heart-felt sense of duty, is the first. If the name of *Wellington* is not so much a trumpet to the blood as the simpler name of *Nelson*, the reason for this may be inferred from the above. Alfred in his funeral ode on the victor of Waterloo ventures not to call him

the greatest soldier of all time, though in the same ode he invokes Nelson as the greatest sailor since the world began

At Trafalgar Nelson on the brink of opening the fight, sat down and wrote his last brief will and testament If under the presentiment of the most magnificent of all victories, to be crowned by his own glorious death a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds, if thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice were indeed vainglory, then affectation and fustian in each truly heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts

CHAPTER V

The outbreak at the Nore was put down But not every grievance was redressed If the contractors, for example, were no longer permitted to ply some practices peculiar to their tribe everywhere, such as providing shoddy cloth, rations not sound, or false in the measure not the less impressment for one thing, went on By custom sanctioned for centuries and judicially maintained by a Lord Chancellor as late as Mansfield that mode of manning the fleet a mode now fallen into a sort of abeyance but never formally renounced, it was not practicable to give up in those years Its abrogation would have crippled the indispensable fleet, one wholly under canvas, no steam power, its innumerable sails and thousands of cannon, everything in short, worked by muscle alone a fleet the more insatiate in demand for men, because then multiplying its ships of all grades against contingencies present and to come of the convulsed Continent

Discontent foreran the Two Mutinies, and more or less it uningly survived them Hence it was not unreasonable to apprehend some return of trouble, sporadic or general One instance of such apprehensions In the same year with this story, Nelson, then Vice Admiral Sir Horatio, being with the fleet off the Spanish coast, was directed by the Admiral in command to shift his pennant from the *Captain* to the *Theseus*, and for this reason

that the latter ship having newly arrived in the station from home where it had taken part in the Great Mutiny, danger was apprehended from the temper of the men, and it was thought that an officer like Nelson was the one, not indeed to terrify the crew into base subjection, but to win them by force of his mere presence back to an allegiance, if not as enthusiastic as his own, yet as true. So it was that for a time on more than one quarter deck anxiety did exist. At sea precautionary vigilance was strained against relapse. At short notice an engagement might come on. When it did, the lieutenants assigned to batteries felt it incumbent on them in some instances to stand with drawn swords behind the men working the guns.

But on board the seventy-four in which Billy now swung his hammock, very little in the manner of the men and nothing obvious in the demeanor of the officers would have suggested to an ordinary observer that the Great Mutiny was a recent event. In their general bearing and conduct the commissioned officers of a war ship naturally take their tone from the commander, that is if he has that ascendancy of character that ought to be his.

Captain the Honourable Edward Fairfax Vere to give his full title, was a bachelor of forty or thereabouts, a sailor of distinction, even in a time prolific of renowned seamen. Though allied to the higher nobility his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstance. He had seen much service, been in various engagements, always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline. Thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so. For his gallantry in the West Indian waters as flag lieutenant under Rodney in that Admiral's crowning victory, over De Grasse, he was made a post captain.

Ashore in the garb of a civilian, scarcely any one would have taken him for a sailor more especially that he never garnished unprofessional talk with nautical terms, and gave in his bearing, evinced little appreciation of mere humour. It was not out of keeping with these traits that on a passage when nothing demanded his paramount action, he was the most undemonstrative of men. Any landsman observing this gentleman not conspicuous

by his stature and wearing no pronounced insignia, emerging from his retreat to the open deck and noting the silent deference of the officers retreating to leeward, might have taken him for the King's guest, a civilian aboard the King's ship, some highly honourable discreet envoy on his way to an important post. But in fact, this unobtrusiveness of demeanour may have proceeded from a certain unaffected modesty of manhood sometimes accompanying a resolute nature, a modesty evinced at all times not calling for pronounced action, and which shown in any rank of life suggests a virtue aristocratic in kind.

As with some others engaged in various departments of the world's more heroic activities Captain Vere, though practical enough upon occasion would at times betray a certain dreaminess of mood. Standing alone on the weather side of the greater deck, one hand holding by the rigging he would absently gaze off at the black sea. At the presentation to him then of some minor matter interrupting the current of his thoughts, he would show more or less nascibility but instantly he would control it.

In the navy he was popularly known by the appellation—Starry Vere. How such a designation happened to fall upon one who, whatever his sturdy qualities, was without any brilliant ones, was in this wise: a favourite kinsman Lord Denton, a free-handed fellow, had been the first to meet and congratulate him upon his return to England from the West Indian cruise, and but the day previous turning over a copy of Andrew Marvell's poems had lighted, not for the first time, however, upon the lines entitled Appleton House—the name of one of the seats of their common ancestor—a hero in the German wars of the seventeenth century, in which poem occur the lines,

*This tis to have been from the first
In a domestic heaven nursed
Under the discipline severe
Of Funfax and the starry Vere*

And so, upon embracing his cousin fresh from Rodney's victory, wherein he had played so gallant a part brimming over with just family pride in the sailor of their house, he exuberantly ex-

claimed, Give ye joy, Ed, give ye joy, my starry Vere! This got currency, and the novel prefix serving in familiar parlance readily to distinguish the *Indomitable's* Captain from another Vere, his senior, a distant relative, an officer of like rank in the navy, it remained permanently attached to the surname

CHAPTER VI

In view of the part that the commander of the *Indomitable* plays in scenes shortly to follow, it may be well to fill out that sketch of him outlined in the previous chapter. Aside from his qualities as a sea-officer Captain Vere was an exceptional character. Unlike no few of England's renowned sailors, long and arduous service with signal devotion to it had not resulted in absorbing and *salting* the entire man. He had a marked leaning towards everything intellectual. He loved books, never going to sea without a newly replenished library, compact but of the best. The isolated leisure, in some cases so wearisome falling at intervals to commanders even during a war cruise, never was tedious to Captain Vere. With nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle, his bias was towards those books to which every serious mind of superior order, occupying any active post of authority in the world, naturally inclines, books treating of actual men and events, no matter of what era—history, biography and unconventional writers, who, free from cant and convention, like Montaigne, honestly, and in the spirit of common sense, philosophize upon realities.

In this love of reading he found confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics there had got to be established in him some positive convictions which he forefelt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired. In view of the humbled position in which his lot was cast this was well for him. His settled convictions were as a dyke against those invading waters of novel opinion—social, political, and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days—minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that

aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them because they seemed to him incapable of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the good of mankind

With minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank with whom at times he would necessarily consort, found him lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman as they deemed. Upon any chance withdrawal from their company one would be apt to say to another something like this: Vere is a noble fellow. Sturry Vere. Spite the gazettes Sir Horatio is at bottom scarce a better seaman or fighter. But between you and me now don't you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running through him? Yes, like the King's yarn in a coil of navy rope?

Some apparent ground there was for this sort of confidential criticism, since not only did the Captain's discourse never fall into the jocosely familiar, but in illustrating any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time, he would cite some historic character or incident of antiquity with the same easy air that he would cite from the moderns. He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions, however pertinent they might really be, were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals. But considerateness in such matters is not easy to natures constituted like Captain Vere's. Their honesty prescribes to them directness, sometimes far reaching, like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier.

CHAPTER VII

The lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere's staff it is not necessary here to particularize nor needs it to make mention of any of the warrant officers. But among the petty officers was one who, having much to do with the story may as well be forthwith introduced. This portrait I essay, but shall never hit it.

This was John Claggart, the Master at arms. But that sea-title may to landsmen seem somewhat equivocal. Originally, doubtless, that petty officer's function was the instruction of the men in the use of arms, sword or cutlass. But very long ago, owing to the advance in gunnery making hand to hand encounters less frequent—and giving to nitre and sulphur the pre-eminence over steel—that function ceased, the master-at-arms of a great warship becoming a sort of chief of police charged among other matters, with the duty of preserving order on the populous lower gun decks.

Claggart was a man of about five and thirty, somewhat spare and tall yet of no ill figure upon the whole. His hand was too small and shapely to have been accustomed to hard toil. The face was a notable one, the features, all except the chin, cleanly cut as those on a Greek medallion, yet the chin beardless as Tecumseh's, had something of the strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the pints of the Rev. Dr. Titus Oates, the historical deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II, and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot. It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect, silken jet curls partly clustering over it, making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old.

This complexion singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors, and in part the result of his official seclusion from the sunlight, though it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood. But his general aspect and manner were so suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function, that when not actively engaged in it he looked like a man of high quality, social and moral, who for reasons of his own was keeping incognito. Nothing was known of his former life. It might be that he was an Englishman, and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth, but through naturalization in early childhood. Among certain grizzled sea gossips of the gun decks and fore-castle went a rumour, perdue, that the Master at arms was a

chevalier who had volunteered into the King's navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King's bench. The fact that nobody could substantiate this report was, of course, nothing against its secret currency. Such a rumour once started on the gun decks in reference to almost any one below the rank of a commissioned officer would, during the period assigned to this narrative, have seemed not altogether wanting in credibility to the tarry old wiseacres of a man of war crew. And indeed a man of Claggart's accomplishments, without prior nautical experience entering the navy at mature life as he did, and necessarily allotted at the start to the lowest grade in it, a man, too, who never made allusion to his previous life ashore, these were circumstances which in the dearth of exact knowledge as to his true antecedents opened to the invidious a vague field for unfavorable surmise.

But the sailors' dog watch gossip concerning him derived a vague plausibility from the fact that now, for some period, the British Navy could so little afford to be squeamish in the matter of keeping up the muster rolls, that not only were press gangs notoriously abroad both afloat and ashore, but there was little or no secret about another matter namely, that the London police were at liberty to capture any able bodied suspect, and any questionable fellow at large and summarily ship him to the dock yard or fleet. Furthermore, even among voluntary enlistments, there were instances where the motive thereto partook neither of patriotic impulse nor yet of a random desire to experience a bit of sea life and martial adventure. Insolvent debtors of minor grade, together with the promiscuous lame ducks of morality found in the navy a convenient and secure refuge. Secure, because once enlisted aboard a King's ship, they were as much in sanctuary as the transgressor of the middle ages harbouring himself under the shadow of the altar. Such sanctioned irregularities, which for obvious reasons the Government would hardly think to parade at the time—and which consequently, and as affecting the least influential class of mankind, have all but dropped into oblivion—lend colour to something for the truth whereof I do not vouch, and hence have some scruple in stating, something I remember having seen in print, though the book I cannot recall, but

the same thing was personally communicated to me now more than forty years ago by an old pensioner in a cocked hat, with whom I had a most interesting talk on the terrace at Greenwich, a Baltimore negro a Trafalgar man. It was to this effect. In the case of a war ship short of hands, whose speedy sailing was imperative, the deficient quota, in lack of any other way of making it good, would be eked out by drafts called direct from the jails. For reasons previously suggested it would not perhaps be very easy at the present day directly to prove or disprove the allegation. But allowed as a verity, how significant would it be of England's straits at the time, confronted by those wars which, like a flight of harpies rose shrieking from the din and dust of the fallen Bastille. That era appears measurably clear to us who look back at it and but read of it. But to the grandfathers of us greybeards, the thoughtful of them, the genius of it presented an aspect like that of Camoens's Spirit of the Cape, an eclipsing menace, mysterious and prodigious. Not America even was exempt from apprehension. At the height of Napoleon's unexampled conquests, there were Americans who had fought at Bunker Hill, who looked forward to the possibility that the Atlantic might prove no barrier against the ultimate schemes of this portentous upstart from the revolutionary chaos, who seemed in act of fulfilling the judgment prefigured in the Apocalypse.

But the less credence was to be given to the gun deck talk touching Claggut seeing that no man holding his office in a man of war can ever hope to be popular with the crew. Besides, in derogatory comments upon any one against whom they have a grudge, or for any reason or no reason unlike, sailors are much like landsmen: they are apt to exaggerate or romance it.

About as much was really known to the *Indomitable's* tars of the Master-at arms career before entering the service as an astronomer knows about a comet's travels prior to its first observable appearance in the sky. The verdict of the sea quidnuncs has been cited only by way of showing what sort of moral impression the man made upon rude uncultivated natures whose conceptions of human wickedness were necessarily of the narrowest, limited to ideas of vulgar rascality,—a thief among the swinging hummocks during a night watch, or the man brokers and land sharks of the seaports.

It was no gossip, however but fact, that though, as before hinted, Claggart upon his entrance into the navy was, as a novice, assigned to the least honourable section of a man-of war's crew, embracing the chudges, he did not long remain there.

The superior capacity he immediately evinced, his constitutional sobriety, his ingratiating deference to superiors, together with a peculiar ferreting genius manifested on a singular occasion, all this capped by a certain austere patriotism, abruptly advanced him to the position of Master-at arms.

Of this maritime chief of police the ship's corporals, so called, were the immediate subordinates, and compliant ones, and this—as is to be noted in some business departments ashore—almost to a degree inconsistent with entire moral volition. His place put various converging wires of underground influence under the chief's control, capable when astutely worked through his understrappers of operating to the mysterious discomfort, if nothing worse, of any of the sea-commonalty.

CHAPTER VIII

Life in the foretop well agreed with Billy Budd. There, when not actually engaged on the yards yet higher aloft, the topmen, who as such had been picked out for youth and activity, constituted an aerial club lounging at ease against the smaller stunsails rolled up into cushions, spinning yarns like the lazy gods, and frequently amused with what was going on in the busy world of the decks below. No wonder then that a young fellow of Billy's disposition was well content in such society. Giving no cause of offence to anybody, he was always alert at a call. So in the merchant service it had been with him. But now such punctiliousness in duty was shown that his topmates would sometimes good naturedly laugh at him for it. This heightened alacrity had its cause, namely, the impression made upon him by the first formal gangway punishment he had ever witnessed, which befell the day following his impressment. It had been incurred by a little fellow, young, a novice, an afterguardsman absent from his assigned post when the ship was being put about, a dereliction resulting in a rather serious hitch to that manœuvre, one demanding instantaneous promptitude in letting go and making fast. When Billy saw the

culprits naked back under the scourge gridironed with red welts and worse, when he marked the dire expression in the liberated man's face, as with his woolen shirt flung over him by the executioner, he rushed forward from the spot to bury himself in the crowd, Billy was horrified. He resolved that never through remissness would he make himself liable to such a visitation, or do or omit aught that might merit even verbal reproof. What then was his surprise and concern when ultimately he found himself getting into petty trouble occasionally about such matters as the stowage of his bag, or something amiss in his hammock, matters under the police oversight of the ship's-corporals of the lower decks, and which brought down on him a vague threat from one of them.

So heedful in all things as he was, how could this be? He could not understand it and it more than vexed him. When he spoke to his young topmates about it, they were either lightly incredulous or found something comical in his unconcealed anxiety. Is it your bag, Billy? said one, well, sew yourself up in it. Billy boy, and then you'll be sure to know if anybody meddles with it.

Now there was a veteran aboard who because his years began to disqualify him for more active work had been recently assigned duty as a mainmastman in his watch, looking to the gear belayed at the rail round about that great spar near the deck. At off times the foretopman had picked up some acquaintance with him and now in his trouble it occurred to him that he might be the sort of person to go to for wise counsel. He was an old Dansker long Anglicized in the service, of few words, many wrinkles and some honourable scars. His wizened face, time tinted and weather-stormed to the complexion of an antique parchment, was here and there peppered blue by the chance explosion of a gun cartridge in action. He was an *Agamemnon* man, some two years prior to the time of this story having served under Nelson when but Sir Horatio in that ship immortal in naval memory and which dismantled and in part broken up to her bare ribs is seen a grand skeleton in Hayden's etching. As one of a boarding party from the *Agamemnon* he had received a cut slantwise along one temple and cheek, leaving a long pale scar like a streak of dawn's light falling athwart the dark visage. It was on account of that scar and

the affair in which it was known that he had received it as well as from his blue peppered complexion, that the Dansker went among the *Indomitable's* crew by the name of Board-her in the smoke

Now the first time that his small weazel eyes happened to light on Billy Budd a certain grim internal merriment set all his ancient wrinkles into antic play. Was it that his eccentric unsentimental old sapience primitive in its kind, saw or thought it saw, something which in contrast with the war-ships environment looked oddly incongruous in the Handsome Sailor? But after slyly studying at intervals, the old Merlin's equivocal merriment was modified. For now when the twain would meet, it would start in his face a quizzing sort of look but it would be but momentary and sometimes replaced by an expression of speculative query as to what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some man-traps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and address and without any touch of defensive ugliness is of little avail and where such innocence as man is capable of does yet, in a moral emergency, not always sharpen the faculties or enlighten the will.

However it was the Dansker in his ascetic way rather took to Billy. Nor was this only because of a certain philosophic interest in such a character. There was another cause. While the old man's eccentricities sometimes bordering on the insane, repelled the juniors, Billy undeterred thereby would make advances never passing the old *Agamemnon* man without a salutation marked by that respect which is seldom lost on the aged however crabbied at times, or whatever their station in life. There was a vein of dry humour, or what not, in the mastman, and whether in freak of patriarchal irony touching Billy's youth and athletic frame or for some other and more recondite reason, from the first in addressing him he always substituted Baby for Billy. The Dansker, in fact, being the originator of the name by which the foretopman eventually became known about ship.

Well then in his mysterious little difficulty going in quest of the wrinkled one, Billy found him off duty on a dog-watch ruminating by himself, seated on a shot box of the upper gun-deck, now and then surveying with a somewhat cynical regard certain of

the more swaggering promenaders there Billy recounted his trouble, again wondering how it all happened. The salt seer at tentively listened, accompanying the foretopman's recitals with queer twitchings of his wrinkles and problematical little sparkles of his small ferret eyes. Making an end of his story, the foretopman asked, And now, Dansker, do tell me what you think of it.

The old man, shoving up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long slant scar at the point where it entered the thin hair laconically said, Baby Budd, *Jimmy Legs* (meaning the Master at arms) is down on you.

Jimmy Legs! ejaculated Billy his welkin eyes expanding, what for? Why he calls me *the sweet and pleasant young fellow*, they tell me.

Does he so? grinned the grizzled one, then said, Ay, Baby Lad, a sweet voice has *Jimmy Legs*.

No, not always. But to me he has. I seldom pass him but there comes a pleasant word.

And that's because he's down upon you, Baby Budd.

Such reiteration, along with the manner of it (incomprehensible to a novice) disturbed Billy almost as much as the mystery for which he had sought explanation. Something less unpleasingly oracular he tried to extract. But the old sea Chiron, thinking perhaps that for the nonce he had sufficiently instructed his young Achilles, pursed his lips, gathered all his wrinkles together, and would commit himself to nothing further.

Years, and those experiences which befall certain shrewder men subordinated life long to the will of superiors. All this had developed in the Dansker the pithy guarded cynicism that was his leading characteristic.

CHAPTER IX

The next day an incident served to confirm Billy Budd in his incredulity as to the Dansker's strange summing up of the case submitted.

The ship at noon going large before the wind was rolling on her course, and he, below at dinner and engaged in some sport

ful talk with the members of his mess, chanced in a sudden lurch to spill the entire contents of his soup pan upon the new scrubbed deck. Claggart, the Master at arms, official rattan in hand, happened to be passing along the battery, in a bry of which the mess was lodged and the greasy liquid streamed just across his path. Stepping over it he was proceeding on his way without comment, since the matter was nothing to take notice of under the circumstances when he happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing, he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the sailor, but checked himself and pointing down to the streaming soup playfully tapped him from behind with his rattan, saying in a low musical voice, peculiar to him at times: Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it too! and with that passed on. Not noted by Billy as not coming within his view was the involuntary smile, or rather grimace, that accompanied Claggart's equivocal words. Aridly it drew down the thin corners of his shapely mouth. But everybody taking his remark as meant for humorous, and at which therefore as coming from a superior they were bound to laugh with counterfeited glee acted accordingly, and Billy tickled it may be, by the allusion to his being the handsome sailor, merrily joined in, then addressing his messmates exclaimed, "There now, who says thit Jimmv I egs is down on me!"

And who said he was Beauty? demanded one Donald with some surprise. Whereat the foretopman looked a little foolish, recalling that it was only one person, Board her-in-the-smoke who had suggested what to him was the smoky idea that this Master at arms was in any peculiar way hostile to him. Mean time that functionary resuming his path must have momentarily worn some expression less guarded than that of the bitter smile and, usurping the face from the heart, some distorting expression perhaps—for a drummer-boy, heedlessly frolicking along from the opposite direction, and chancing to come into light collision with his person was strangely disconcerted by his aspect. Nor was the impression lessened when the official, impulsively giving him a sharp cut with the rattan, vehemently exclaimed, Look where you go!

CHAPTER X

What was the matter with the Master at arms? And, be the matter what it might how could it have direct relation to Billy Budd, with whom prior to the affair of the spilled soup he had never come into any special contact, official or otherwise? What indeed could the trouble have to do with one so little inclined to give offence as the merchantship's *peacemaker*, even him who in Claggart's own phrase was 'The sweet and pleasant young fellow'? Yes, why should *Jimmy Legs*, to borrow the Dansker's expression be *down* on the Handsome Sailor?

But at heart and not for nothing, as the late chance encounter may indicate to the discerning, down on him, secretly down on him he assuredly was

Now to invent something touching the more private career of Claggart—something involving Billy Budd, of which something the latter should be wholly ignorant, some romantic incident implying that Claggart's knowledge of the young blue jacket began at some period anterior to catching sight of him on board the seventy-four—all this, not so difficult to do, might avail in a more or less interesting way to account for whatever enigma may appear to lurk in the case. But in fact, there was nothing of the sort. And yet the cause, necessarily to be assumed as the sole one assignable, is in its very realism as much charged with that prime element of Radcliffian romance, *the mysterious*, as any that the ingenuity of the author of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* could devise. For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be?—if not called forth by that very harmlessness itself.

Now there can exist no irritating juxtaposition of dissimilar personalities comparable to that which is possible aboard a great war ship fully manned and at sea. There every day among all ranks, almost every man comes into more or less of contact with almost every other man. Wholly there to avoid even the sight of an aggravating object one must needs give it Jonah's toss, or jump

overboard himself. Imagine how all this might eventually operate on some peculiar human creature the direct reverse of a saint?

But for the adequate comprehending of Claggart by a normal nature, these hints are insufficient. To pass from a normal nature to him one must cross the deadly space between, and this is best done by indirection.

Long ago an honest scholar, my senior, said to me in reference to one who like himself is now no more, a man so unimpeachably respectable that against him nothing was ever openly said, though among the few something was whispered, Yes, X—— is a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady's fan. You are aware that I am the adherent of no organized religion, much less of any philosophy built into a system. Well, for all that, I think that to try and get into X——, enter his labyrinth and get out again, without a clue derived from some source other than what is known as *knowledge of the world*—that were hardly possible, at least for me.

Why, said I, X——, however singular a study to some, is yet human, and knowledge of the world assuredly implies the knowledge of human nature and in most of its varieties."

Yes, but a superficial knowledge of it serving ordinary purposes. But for anything deeper, I am not certain whether to know the world and to know human nature be not two distinct branches of knowledge which while they may co-exist in the same heart yet either may exist with little or nothing of the other. Nay, in an average man of the world, his constant rubbing with it blunts that fine spiritual insight indispensable to the understanding of the essential in certain exceptional characters whether evil ones or good. In a matter of some importance I have seen a girl wind an old lawyer about her little finger. Nor was it the dotage of senile love. Nothing of the sort. But he knew law better than he knew the girl's heart. Coke and Blackstone hardly shed so much light into obscure spiritual places as the Hebrew prophets. And who were they? Mostly recluses.

At the time my inexperience was such that I did not quite see the drift of all this. It may be that I see it now. And, indeed, if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular, one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain

phenomenal men As it is, one must turn to some authority not liable to the charge of being tinctured with the Biblical element

In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato a list attributed to him, occurs this Natural Depravity a depravity according to nature A definition which though savouring of Calvinism by no means involves Calvin's dogma as to total mankind Evidently its intent makes it applicable but to individuals Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply At any rate, for notable instances—since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality,—one must go elsewhere Civilization especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to it It folds itself in the mantle of respectability It has its certain negative virtues serving as silent auxiliaries It never allows wine to get within its guard It is not going too far to say that it is without vices or small sins There is a phenomenal pride in it that excludes them from anything Never mercenary or avaricious In short the depravity here meant partakes nothing of the sordid or sensual It is serious, but free from acerbity Though no flatterer of mankind it never speaks ill of it

But the thing which in eminent instances signalizes so exceptional a nature is this though the man's even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason not the less in his soul's recesses he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational That is to say towards the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of malignity would seem to partake of the insane, he will direct a cool judgment sagacious and sound

These men are true madmen, and of the most dangerous sort for their lunacy is not continuous, but occasional, evoked by some special object, it is secretive and self contained so that when most active it is, to the average mind not distinguished from sanity and for the reason above suggested that whatever its aims may be (and the aim is never disclosed) the method and the outward proceeding is always perfectly rational

Now something such was Claggart, in whom was the mania

of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living but born with him and innate, in short, a depravity according to nature

Can it be this phenomenon, disowned or not acknowledged, that in some criminal cases puzzles the courts? For this cause have our juries at times not only to endure the prolonged contentions of lawyers with their facts but also the yet more perplexing strife of the medical experts with theirs? And why leave it to them? Why not subpoena as well the clerical proficient? Their vocation bringing them into peculiar contact with so many human beings and sometimes in their least guarded hour, in interviews very much more confidential than those of physician and patient, this would seem to qualify them to know something about those intricacies involved in the question of moral responsibility, whether in a given case, say the crime proceeded from mania in the brain or ripples of the heart. As to any differences among themselves which clerical proficient might develop on the stand these could hardly be greater than the direct contradictions exchanged between the remunerated medical experts

Dark sayings are these some will say. But why? It is because they somewhat savour of Holy Writ in its phrase mysteries of iniquity

The point of the story turning on the hidden nature of the Master at arms has necessitated this chapter. With an added hint or two in connection with the incident at the mess, the resumed narrative must be left to vindicate, as it may, its own credibility

CHAPTER XI

(Pale ire, envy and despair)

That Claggart's figure was not amiss, and his face, save the chin, well moulded, has already been said. Of these favourable points he seemed not insensible for he was not only neat but careful in his dress. But the form of Billy Budd was heroic, and if his face was without the intellectual look of the pallid Claggart's, not the less was it lit, like his, from within, though from a different source. The bonfire in his heart made luminous the rose-tan in his cheek.

In view of the marked contrast between the persons of the

twain, it is more than probable that when the Master at arms in the scene last given applied to the sailor the proverb *Handsome is as handsome does* he there let escape an ironic inkling, not caught by the young sailors who heard it, as to what it was that had first moved him against Billy, namely, his significant personal beauty

Now envy and antipathy, passions irreconcilable in reason, nevertheless in fact may spring conjoined like Chang and Eng in one birth. Is Envy then such a monster? Well, though many an arraigned mortal has in hopes of mitigated penalty pleaded guilty to horrible actions, did ever anybody seriously confess to envy? Something there is in it universally felt to be more shameful than even felonious crime. And not only does everybody disown it but the better sort are inclined to incredulity when it is in earnest imputed to an intelligent man. But since its lodgment is in the heart, not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it. But Claggart's was no vulgar form of passion. Nor, as directed toward Billy Budd, did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy which marred Saul's visage perturbedly brooding on the comely young David. Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these happened to go along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent. To him the spirit lodged within Billy, and looking out from his welkin eyes as from windows—that ineffability it was which made the dimple in his dyed cheeks, supplanted his joints, and dancing in his yellow curls made him pre-eminently the Handsome Sailor. One person excepted, the Master at arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd, and the insight but intensified his passion, which, assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynic disdain—disdain of innocence. To be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an æsthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free and easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despised of it.

With no power to annul the elemental evil in himself, though

readily enough he could hide it, apprehending the good, but powerless to be it, a nature like Claggart's sucharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and, like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible act out to the end the part allotted it

Passion, and passion in its profoundest, is not a thing demanding a palatial stage whereon to play its part Down among the groundlings among the beggars and rakers of the garbage, profound passion is enacted And the circumstances that provoke it, how ever trivial or mean are no measure of its power In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun deck and one of the external provocations a man of war's man's spilled soup

Now when the Master at arms noticed whence came that greasy fluid streaming before his feet, he must have taken it—to some extent wilfully perhaps—not for the mere accident it assuredly was, but for the sly escape of a spontaneous feeling on Billy's part more or less answering to the antipathy on his own In effect a foolish demonstration he must have thought, and very harmless, like the futile kick of a heifer which yet were the heifer a shod stallion would not be so harmless Even so was it that into the gall of envy Claggart infused the venom of his contempt But the incident confirmed to him certain tell tale reports purveyed to his ear by *Squeak* one of his more cunning corporals a grizzled little man, so nicknamed by the sailors on account of his squeaky voice and sharp visage ferreting about the dark corners of the lower decks after interlopers satirically suggesting to them the idea of a rat in a cellar

Now his chief's employing him as an implicit tool in laying little traps for the woeiment of the foretopman—for it was from the Master at arms that the petty persecutions heretofore adverted to had proceeded—the corporal having naturally enough concluded that his master could have no love for the sailor, made it his business, faithful understrapper that he was to ferment the ill blood by perverting to his chief certain innocent frolics of the good-natured foretopman besides inventing for his master sundry contemptuous epithets he claimed to have overheard him let fall The Master at-arms never suspected the veracity of these reports, more especially as to the epithets, for he well knew how secretly un

popular may become a master-at arms—at least a master at arms of those days zealous in his function—how the blue jackets shot at him in private their raillery and wit the nickname by which he goes among them (*Jimmy Legs*) implying under the form of merriment their cherished disrespect and dislike

But in view of the greediness of hate for provocation, it hardly needed a purveyor to feed Claggart's passion. An uncommon prudence is habitual with the subtler depravity, for it has everything to hide. And in case of any merely suspected injury its secretiveness voluntarily cuts it off from enlightenment or disillusion, and not unreluctantly action is taken upon surmise as upon certainty. And the retaliation is apt to be in monstrous disproportion to the supposed offence, for when in anybody was revenge in its exactions aught else but an inordinate usurer? But how with Claggart's conscience? For though consciences are unlike as foreheads every intelligence, not including the Scriptural devils who believe and tremble, has one. But Claggart's conscience being but the lawyer to his will, made ogres of trifles, probably arguing that the motive imputed to Billy in spilling the soup just when he did, together with the epithets alleged—these, if nothing more, made a strong case against him now justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness. The Pharisee is the Guy Fawkes prowling in the hid chambers underlying some natures like Claggart's. And they can really form no conception of an unreciprocated malice. Probably the Master-at arms' clandestine persecutions of Billy were started to try the temper of the man but they had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of or ever pervert into even plausible self-justification so that the occurrence at the mess petty if it were was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart and for the rest not improbably it put him upon new experiments.

CHAPTER XII

Not many days after the last incident narrated something befell Billy Budd that more gruelled him than aught that had previously occurred.

It was a warm night for the latitude, and the foretopman, whose watch at the time was properly below, was dozing on the uppermost deck whither he had ascended from his hot hammock—one of hundreds suspended so closely wedged together over a lower gun deck that there was little or no swing to them. He lay as in the shadow of a hull side stretched under the lee of the booms, a piled ridge of spare spars and among which the ship's largest boat, the launch, was stowed. Alongside of three other slumberers from below he lay near one end of the booms which approached from the foremast his station aloft on duty as a foretopman being just over the deck station of the forecastlemen entitling him according to usage to make himself more or less at home in that neighbourhood.

Presently he was stirred into semi-consciousness by somebody, who must have previously sounded the sleep of the others, touching his shoulder and then as the foretopman raised his head, breathing into his ear in a quick whisper, Slip into the lee fore chains. Billy there is something in the wind—don't speak. Quick. I will meet you there and disappeared.

Now Billy—like sundry other essentially good-natured ones—had some of the weakness inseparable from essential good nature, and among these was a reluctance, almost an incapacity of plumply saying *no* to an abrupt proposition not obviously absurd, on the face of it not obviously unfriendly, nor iniquitous. And being of warm blood he had not the phlegm to negative any proposition by unresponsive inaction. Like his sense of fear, his apprehension as to aught outside of the honest and natural was seldom very quick. Besides upon the present occasion, the drowse from his sleep still hung upon him.

However it was he mechanically rose and sleepily wondering what could be *in the wind*, betook himself to the designated place, a narrow platform one of six outside of the high bulwarks and screened by the great dead-eyes and multiple columned lanyards of the shrouds and back stays, and, in a great war ship of that time of dimensions commensurate to the ample hull's magnitude, a tarry balcony in short overhanging the sea, and so secluded that one mariner of the *Indomitable*, a non-conformist old tar of serious turn, made it even in daytime his private oratory.

In this retired nook the stranger soon joined Billy Budd. There was no moon as yet; a haze obscured the star light. He could not distinctly see the stranger's face. Yet from something in the outline and carriage, Billy took him to be, and correctly, for one of the afterguard.

Hist! Billy! said the man in the same quick cautionary whisper as before. You were impressed, weren't you? Well, so was I, and he pruned as to make the effect. But Billy, not knowing exactly what to make of this, said nothing. Then the other: We are not the only impressed ones. Billy: There's a gang of us. Couldn't you—help—at a pinch?

What do you mean? demanded Billy here shaking off his drowse.

Hist! hist! the hurried whisper now growing husky: see here and the man held up two small objects faintly twinkling in the night light. See, they are yours, Bill, if you'll only—

But Billy here broke in, and in his resentful eagerness to deliver himself his vocal infirmity somewhat intruded. D D Damme. I don't know what you are driving at, or what you mean, but you had better g-g-go where you belong! For the moment the fellow was confounded, did not stir, and Billy, springing to his feet, said, If you don't stir I'll toss you back over the rail! There was no mistaking this, and the mysterious emissary decamped, disappearing in the direction of the mainmast in the shadow of the booms.

Hallo! what's the matter? here came growling from a fore-castleman awakened from his deck doze by Billy's raised voice. And as the foretopman reappeared and was recognized by him, Ah, *Beauty*, is it you? Well, something must have been the matter for you st-stuttered.

Oh, rejoined Billy now mastering the impediment, I found an afterguardsman in our part of the ship here and I bid him be off where he belongs.

"And is that all you did about it foretopman?" gruffly demanded another, an unascible old fellow of brick coloured visage and hair, and who was known to his associate fore-castle-men as *Red Pepper*.

Such sneaks I should like to marry to the gunner's daughter!

by that expression meaning that he would like to subject them to disciplinary castigation over a gun

However Billy's rendering of the matter satisfactorily accounted to these inquirers for the brief commotion, since of all the section of a ship's company the forecastle-men, veterans for the most part, and bigoted in their sea prejudices, are the most jealous in resenting territorial encroachments, especially on the part of any of the afterguard, of whom they have but a sorry opinion, chiefly landsmen, never going aloft except to reef or furl the mainsail, and in no wise competent to handle a marlingspike or turn in a *dead-eye*, say

CHAPTER XIII

This incident sorely puzzled Billy Budd. It was an entirely new experience—the first time in his life that he had ever been personally approached in underhanded intriguing fashion. Prior to this encounter he had known nothing of the afterguardsman, the two men being stationed wide apart, one forward and aloft during his watch, the other on deck and aft.

What could it mean? And could they really be guineas, those two glittering objects the interloper had held up to his (Billy's) eyes? Where could the fellow get guineas? Why, even buttons, spare buttons, are not so plentiful at sea. The more he turned the matter over, the more he was nonplussed, and made uneasy and discomfited. In his disgustful recoil from an overture which, though he but ill comprehended, he instinctively knew must involve evil of some sort—Billy Budd was like a young horse fresh from the pasture suddenly inhaling a vile whiff from some chemical factory and by repeated snoutings trying to get it out of his nostrils and lungs. This frame of mind banished all desire of holding further parley with the fellow, even were it but for the purpose of gaining some enlightenment as to his design in approaching him. And yet he was not without natural curiosity to see how such a visitor in the dark would look in broad day.

He espied him the following afternoon in his first dog watch below, one of the smokers on that forward part of the upper gun

deck allotted to the pipe. He recognized him by his general cut and build, more than by his round freckled face and glassy eyes of pale blue, veiled with lashes all but white. And yet Billy was a bit uncertain whether indeed it were he—yonder chap about his own age, chatting and laughing in a free hearted way, leaning against a gun,—a genial young fellow enough to look at, and something of a rattlebram, to all appearance. Rather chubby, too, for a sailor, even an afterguardsman. In short the last man in the world—one would think—to be overburthened with thoughts, especially those perilous thoughts that must needs belong to a conspirator in any serious project, or even to the underling of such a conspirator.

Although Billy was not aware of it the fellow, with one side long glance had perceived Billy first and then noting that Billy was looking at him thereupon nodded a familiar sort of friendly recognition as to an old acquaintance, without interrupting the talk he was engaged in with the group of smokers. A day or two afterwards chancing in the evening promenade on a gun deck, to pass Billy, he offered a flying word of goodfellowship as it were, which by its unexpectedness, and equivocalness under the circumstances, so embarrassed Billy that he knew not how to respond to it and let it go unnoticed.

Billy was now left more at a loss than before. The ineffectual speculations into which he was led were so disturbingly alien to him that he did his best to smother them. It never entered his mind that here was a matter which from its extreme questionableness, it was his duty as a loyal blue jacket to report in the proper quarter. And probably had such a step been suggested to him, he would have been deterred from taking it by the thought—one of novice magnanimity—that it would savour overmuch of the dirty work of a tell tale. He kept the thing to himself. Yet upon one occasion he could not forbear a little disburthening himself to the old Dansker, tempted thereto perhaps by the influence of a balmy night when the ship lay becalmed the twain silent for the most part, sitting together on deck, their heads propped against the bulwarks. But it was only a partial and anonymous account that Billy gave—the unfounded scruples above referred to preventing full disclosure to anybody. Upon hearing Billy's version,

the sage Dansker seemed to divine more than he was told, and after a little meditation, during which his wrinkles were pursed as into a point—quite effacing for the time that quizzing expression his face sometimes wore—answered Didnt I say so, Baby Budd?

Say what? demanded Billy

Why, *Jimmy Legs* is down on you

And what, rejoined Billy in amazement, has *Jimmy Legs* to do with that cracked afterguardsman?

Ho, it was an afterguardsman then a cat's paw only a cat's paw! And with that exclamation, which, whether it had reference to a light puff of air just then coming over the calm sea, or subtler relation to the afterguardsman, there is no telling The old Merlin gave a twisting wrench with his black teeth at his plug of tobacco—vouchsafing no reply to Billy's impetuous question, though now repeated for it was his wont to relapse into grim silence when interrogated in sceptical sort as to any of his sententious oracles, not always very clear ones, but rather partaking of that obscurity which invests most Delphic deliverances from any quarter

CHAPTER XIV

Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught, and never gives advice

Yes, despite the Dansker's pithy insistence as to the Master-at-arms being at the bottom of these strange experiences of Billy on board the *Indomitable* the young sailor was ready to ascribe them to almost anybody but the man who to use Billy's own expression always had a pleasant word for him This is to be wondered at Yet not so much to be wondered at In certain matters, some sailors even in mature life remain unsophisticated enough But a young seafarer of the disposition of our athletic foretopman is yet very much of a child man And yet a child's utter innocence is but its blank ignorance, and the innocence more or less wanes as intelligence waxes But in Billy Budd intelligence, such as it was, had advanced, while yet his simple mindedness remained for the most part unaffected Experience is a teacher indeed, yet did Billy's years make his experience small Besides,

he had none of that intuitive knowledge of the bad which in natures not good or incompletely so foreshadows experience, and therefore may pertain as in some instances it too clearly does pertain even to youth

And what could Billy know of man except of man as a mere sailor? And the old fashioned sailor, the veritable man before the mast—the sailor from boyhood up—he though indeed of the same species as a landsman, is in some respects singularly distinct from him. The sailor is frankness, the landsman is finesse. Life is not a game with the sailor, demanding the long head, no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straightforwardness, and ends are attained by indirection: an oblique, tedious barren game hardly worth that poor candle burnt out in playing it.

Yes as a class, sailors are in character a juvenile race. Even their deviations are marked by juvenility. And this more especially holding true with the sailors of Billy's time. Then, too, certain things which apply to all sailors do more pointedly operate here and there upon the junior one. Every sailor, too, is accustomed to obey orders without debating them, his life afloat is externally ruled for him: he is not brought into that promiscuous commerce with mankind where unobstructed free agency on equal terms—equal superficially, at least—soon teaches one that unless, upon occasion he exercises a distrust keen in proportion to the fulness of the appearance, some foul turn may be served him. A ruled, undemonstrative distrustfulness is so habitual not with business men so much as with men who know their kind in less shallow relations than business: namely certain men of the world that they come at last to employ it all but unconsciously: and some of them would very likely feel real surprise at being charged with it as one of their general characteristics.

CHAPTER XV

But after the little matter at the mess Billy Budd no more found himself in strange trouble at times about his hammock or his clothes bag, or what not. While, as to that smile that occasionally

sunned him, and the pleasant passing word these were, if not more frequent, yet if anything more pronounced than before

But for all that, there were certain other demonstrations now. When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy rolling along the upper gun deck in the leisure of the second dog watch, exchanging passing broadsides of fun with other young promenaders in the crowd that glance would follow the cheerful sea Hyperion with a settled meditative and melancholy expression—his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shivering the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut. But sometimes, catching sight in advance of the foretopman coming in his direction, he would, upon their nearing, step aside a little to let him pass dwelling upon Billy for the moment with the glittering dental satire of a Guise. Yet, upon an abrupt unforeseen encounter, a red light would flash forth from his eye, like a spark from an anvil in a dusky smithy. That quick fierce light was a strange one darted from orbs which in repose were of the colour nearest approaching a deeper violet the softest of shades.

Though some of these caprices of the pit could not but be observed by their object, yet were they beyond the construing of such a nature. And the thews of Billy were hardly comparable with that sort of sensitive spiritual organization which in some cases instinctively conveys to ignorant innocence an admonition of the proximity of the malign. He thought the Master-at-arms acted in a manner rather queer at times. That was all. But the occasional frank air and pleasant word went for what they purported to be—the young sailor never having heard as yet of the too fair spoken man.

Had the foretopman been conscious of having done or said anything to provoke the ill will of the official, it would have been different with him, and his sight might have been purged if not sharpened.

So was it with him in yet another matter. Two minor officers, the armourer, and captain of the hold, with whom he had never exchanged a word, his position on the ship not bringing him into contact with them, these men now for the first began to cast upon Billy—when they chanced to encounter him—that peculiar glance which evidences that the man from whom it comes has been some way tampered with, and to the prejudice of him upon whom the glance lights. Never did it occur to Billy as a thing to be noted, or a thing suspicious—though he well knew the fact that the armourer and captain of the hold, with the ship's yeoman, apothecary, and others of that grade, were by naval usage, mess-mates of the Master-at-arms, men with ears convenient to his confidential tongue.

But the general popularity that our Handsome Sailor's manly forwardness upon occasion, and irresistible good nature, indicating no mental superiority, tending to excite an invidious feeling, this good will on the part of most of his shipmates made him the less to concern himself about such mute aspects toward him as those whereto illusion has just been made.

As to the afterguardsman, though Billy for reasons already given, necessarily saw little of him, yet when the two did happen to meet, invariably came the fellows off-hand cheerful recognition, sometimes accompanied by a passing pleasant word or two. Whatever that equivocal young person's original design may really have been, or the design of which he might have been the deputy, certain it was from his manner upon these occasions, that he had wholly dropped it.

It was as if his precocity of crookedness (and every vulgar villain is precocious) had for once deceived him, and the man he had sought to entrap as a simpleton had, through his very simplicity, baffled him.

But shrewd ones may opine that it was hardly possible for Billy to refrain from going up to the afterguardsman and bluntly demanding to know his purpose in the initial interview, so abruptly closed in the fore-chains. Shrewd ones may also think it but natural in Billy to set about sounding some of the other impressed men of the ship in order to discover what basis, if any, there was for the emissary's obscure suggestions as to plotting disaffec-

tion aboard The shrewd may so think But something more, or rather, something else than mere shrewdness is perhaps needful for the due understanding of such a character as Billy Budd's

As to Claggart, the monomania in the man—if that indeed it were—as involuntarily disclosed by stars in the manifestations detailed, yet in general covered over by his self contained and rational demeanour this, like a subterranean fire was eating its way deeper and deeper in him Something decisive must come of it

CHAPTER XVI

After the mysterious interview in the fore chains—the one so abruptly ended there by Billy—nothing especially germane to the story occurred until the events now about to be narrated

Elsewhere it has been said that owing to the lack of frigates (of course better sloops than line of battle ships) in the English squadron up the Straits at that period, the *Indomitable* was occasionally employed not only as an available substitute for a scout, but at times on detached service of more important kind This was not alone because of her sailing qualities, not common in a ship of her rate but quite as much, probably that the character of her commander—it was thought—specially adapted him for any duty where, under unforeseen difficulties, a prompt initiative might have to be taken in some matter demanding knowledge and ability in addition to those qualities employed in good seamanship It was on an expedition of the latter sort, a somewhat distant one, and when the *Indomitable* was almost at her furthest remove from the fleet, that in the latter part of an afternoon watch she unexpectedly came in sight of a ship of the enemy It proved to be a frigate The latter—perceiving through the glass that the weight of men and metal would be heavily against her—invoking her light heels, crowded on sail to get away After a chase urged almost against hope—and lasting until about the middle of the first dog watch she signally succeeded in effecting her escape

Not long after the pursuit had been given up, and ere the excitement incident thereto had altogether waned away, the Master at arms, ascending from his cavernous sphere, made his

appearance (cap in hand) by the mainmast respectfully awaiting the notice of Captain Vere—then solitary walking the weather side of the quarter deck—doubtless somewhat chafed at the failure of the pursuit. The spot where Claggart stood was the place allotted to the men of lesser grades when seeking some more particular interview either with the officer of the deck or the Captain himself. But from the latter it was not often that a sailor or petty officer of those days would seek a hearing; only some exceptional case, would, according to established custom, have warranted that.

Presently just as the Commander, absorbed in his reflections, was on the point of turning aft in his promenade, he became sensible of Claggart's presence and saw the doffed cap held in deferential expectancy. Here be it said that Captain Vere's personal knowledge of this petty officer had only begun at the time of the ship's last sailing from home. Claggart then for the first in transfer from a ship detained for repairs supplying on board the *Indomitable* the place of a previous master at arms disabled and ashore.

No sooner did the Commander observe who it was that now so deferentially stood awaiting his notice than a peculiar expression came over him. It was not unlike that which uncontrollably will flit across the countenance of one at unawares encountering a person who though known to him indeed, has hardly been long enough known for thorough knowledge, but something in whose aspect nevertheless now for the first time, provokes a vaguely repellent distaste. Coming to a stand and resuming much of his wonted official manner save that a sort of impatience lurked in the intonation of the opening word, he said, "Well? What is it, Master at arms?"

With the air of a subordinate grieved at the necessity of being a messenger of ill tidings and while conscientiously determined to be frank, yet equally resolved upon shunning overstatement Claggart at this invitation, or rather summons to disburthen spoke up. What he said conveyed in the language of no uneducated man, was to the effect following if not altogether in these words, namely, that during the chase and preparations for the possible encounter he had seen enough to convince him that at

least one sailor aboard was a dangerous character in a ship mustering some who not only had taken a guilty part in the late serious trouble, but others also who, like the man in question, had entered His Majesty's service under another form than enlistment.

At this point Captain Vere, with some impatience, interrupted him.

Be direct, man, say impressed men.

Claggart made a gesture of subservience and proceeded. Quite lately he (Claggart) had begun to suspect that some sort of movement prompted by the sailor in question was covertly going on, but he had not thought himself warranted in reporting the suspicion so long as it remained indistinct. But from what he had that afternoon observed in the man referred to, the suspicion of something clandestine going on had advanced to a point less removed from certainty. He deeply felt—he added—the serious responsibility assumed in making a report involving such possible consequences to the individual mainly concerned, besides tending to augment those natural anxieties which every naval commander must feel in view of the extraordinary outbreak so recent as those which, he sorrowfully said it, it needed not to name.

Now at the first broaching of the matter Captain Vere taken by surprise, could not wholly dissemble his disquietude, but as Claggart went on the former's aspect changed into restiveness under something in the testifier's manner in giving his testimony. However he refrained from interrupting him. And Claggart, continuing, concluded with this:

God forbid, your honour, that the *Indomitable's* should be the experience of the—

Never mind that! here peremptorily broke in the superior, his face altering with anger instantly, divining the ship that the other was about to name, one in which the Nore Mutiny assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardized the life of its commander. Under the circumstances he was indignant at the purposed allusion. When the commissioned officers themselves were on all occasions very heedful how they referred to the recent events,—for a petty officer unnecessarily to allude to them in the presence of his captain, this struck him as a most im-

modest presumption Besides to his quick sense of self respect, it even looked under the circumstances something like an attempt to alarm him Nor at that was he without some surprise that one who, so far as he had hitherto come under his notice had shown considerable tact in his function, should in this particular evince such lack of it

But these thoughts and kindred dubious ones flitting across his mind were suddenly replaced by an intuitional surmise which though as yet obscure in form, seemed practically to affect his reception of the ill tidings Certain it is that long versed in every thing pertaining to the complicated gun deck life (which like every other form of life has its secret mines and dubious side, the side popularly disclaimed), Captain Vere did not permit himself to be unduly disturbed by the general tenor of his subordinate's report Furthermore, if in view of recent events prompt action should be taken at the first palpable sign of recurring insubordination—for all that, not judicious would it be, he thought, to keep the idea of lingering disaffection alive by undue forwardness in crediting an informer even if his own subordinate, and charged with police surveillance of the crew This feeling would not perhaps have so prevailed with him were it not that upon a prior occasion the patriotic zeal officially evinced by Claggart had somewhat irritated him as appearing rather supersensible and strained Furthermore something even in the official's self-possessed and somewhat ostentatious manner in making his specifications strangely reminded him of a bandsman a perjured witness in a capital case before a court martial ashore of which when a lieutenant he Captain Vere had been a member

Now the peremptory check given to Claggart in the matter of the arrested allusion was quickly followed up by this You say that there is at least one dangerous man aboard Name him

William Budd a foretopman in your honour—

William Budd, repeated Captain Vere with unfeigned astonishment, and mean you the man our Lieutenant Ratchiffe took from the merchantman not very long ago—the young fellow who seems to be so popular with the men—Billy, the Handsome Sailor, as they call him?

The same your honour, but for all his youth and good looks,

a deep one Not for nothing does he insinuate himself into the good will of his shipmates, since at the least they will at a pinch say a good word for him at all hazards Did Lieutenant Ratchiffe happen to tell you honour of that adroit fling of Budd's jumping up in the cutter's bow under the merchantman's stern when he was being taken off? It is even masqued by that sort of good humoured air that at heart he resents his impressment You have but noted his fair cheek A man trap may be under his fine ruddy-tipped daisies

Now the *Handsome Sailor*, as a signal figure among the crew, had naturally enough attracted the Captain's attention from the first Though in general not very demonstrative to his officers, he had congratulated Lieutenant Ratchiffe upon his good fortune in lighting on such a fine specimen of the *genus homo* who, in the nude, might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the fall

As to Billy's adieu to the ship *Rights of Man*, which the boarding lieutenant had indeed reported to him, Captain Vere,—but in a deferential way—more as a good story than aught else,—though mistakenly understanding it as a satiric sally, had but thought so much the better of the impressed man for it, as a military sailor admiring the spirit that could take an arbitrary enlistment so merrily and sensibly The foretopman's conduct, too, so far as it had fallen under the Captain's notice had confirmed the first happy augury, while the new recruit's qualities as a *sailor man* seemed to be such that he had thought of recommending him to the executive officer for promotion to a place that would more frequently bring him under his own observation, namely, the captaincy of the mizzentop replacing there in the starboard watch a man not so young whom partly for that reason he deemed less fitted for the post Be it parenthesized here that since the mizzentopmen have not to handle such breadths of heavy canvas as the lower sailors on the mainmast and foremast, a young man if of the right stuff not only seems best adapted to duty there, but, in fact, is generally selected for the captaincy of that top, and the company under him are light hands, and often but striplings In sum, Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the times was called a *King's*

bargain, that is to say, for His Britannic Majesty's navy a capital investment at small outlay or none at all.

After a brief pause—during which the reminiscences above mentioned passed vividly through his mind—he weighed the import of Claggart's last suggestion, conveyed in the phrase, *pitfall under the clover*—and the more he weighed it the less reliance he felt in the informer's good faith. Suddenly he turned upon him.

Do you come to me, Master-at-arms, with so foggy a tale? As to Budd, cite me an act or spoken word of his confirmatory of what you here in general charge against him. Stay, drawing nearer to him, heed what you speak. Just now and in a case like this there is a yard-arm end for the false witness."

Ah, your honour! sighed Claggart mildly shaking his shapely head as in sad deprecation of such unmerited severity of tone. Then bristling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion—he circumstantially alleged certain words and acts which collectively if credited, led to presumptions mortally inculcating Budd, and for some of these averments he added, substantiating proof was not far.

With grey eyes now impatient and distrustful, essaying to fathom to the bottom Claggart's calm violet ones, Captain Vere again heard him out: then for the moment stood ruminating. The mood he evinced—Claggart—himself for the time liberated from the other's scrutiny—steadily regarded with a look difficult to render—a look curious of the operation of his tactics—a look such as might have been that of the spokesman of the envious children of Jacob deceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood-dyed coat of young Joseph.

Though something exceptional in the moral quality of Captain Vere made him, in earnest encounter with a fellowman, a veritable touchstone of that man's essential nature yet now as to Claggart and what was really going on in him his feeling part took less of intuition than of strong suspicion clogged by strange dubieties. The perplexity he evinced proceeded less from aught touching the man informed against—as Claggart doubtless opined—than from consideration how best to act in regard to the informer. At first, indeed, he was naturally for sum-

moning that substantiation of his allegations which Claggart said was at hand. But such a proceeding would result in the matter at once getting abroad—which—in the present stage of it, he thought, might undesirably affect the ship's company. If Claggart was a false witness—that closed the affair. And therefore, before trying the accusation, he would first practically test the accuser, and he thought this could be done in a quiet undemonstrative way.

The measure he determined upon involved a shifting of the scene—a transfer to a place less exposed to observation than the broad quarter deck. For although the few gun room officers there at the time had in due observance of naval etiquette, withdrawn to leeward the moment Captain Vere had begun his promenade on the decks weather side, and though during the colloquy with Claggart they of course ventured not to diminish the distance, and though throughout the interview Captain Vere's voice was far from high, and Claggart's silvery and low, and the wind in the cordage and the wash of the sea helped the moire to put them beyond ear shot, nevertheless, the interview's continuance already had attracted observation from some topmen aloft, and other sailors in the waist or further forward.

Having now determined upon his measures, Captain Vere forthwith took action. Abruptly turning to Claggart he asked, 'Master at arms, is it now Budd's watch aloft?'

No, your honour. Whereupon—Mr Wilkes, summoning the nearest midshipman, 'tell Albert to come to me. Albert was the Captain's hammock-boy, a sort of sea valet in whose discretion and fidelity his master had much confidence. The lad appeared. 'You know Budd the foretopman?'

'I do, Sir.

'Go find him. It is his watch off. Manage to tell him out of ear shot that he is wanted aft. Contrive it that he speaks to nobody. Keep him in talk yourself. And not till you get well aft here, not till then let him know that the place where he is wanted is my cabin. You understand. Go—Master-at-arms, show yourself on the decks below, and when you think it time for Albert to be coming with his man, stand by quietly to follow the sailor in.'

CHAPTER XVII

Now when the foretopman found himself closeted, as it were, in the cabin with the Captain and Claggart, he was surprised enough. But it was a surprise unaccompanied by apprehension or distrust. To an immature nature essentially honest and humane, forewarning intimations of subtler danger from one's kind come tardily, if at all. The only thing that took shape in the young sailor's mind was this: Yes, the Captain, I have always thought, looks kindly upon me. I wonder if he's going to make me his coxswain. I should like that. And maybe now he is going to ask the Master at arms about me.

Shut the door there, sir, said the Commander. Stand with out and let nobody come in.—Now, Master at arms, tell this man to his face what you told of him to me—and stood prepared to scrutinize the mutually confronting visages.

With the measured step and calm collected air of an asylum physician approaching in the public hall some patient beginning to show indications of a coming psychosis, Claggart deliberately advanced within short range of Billy and mesmerically looking him in the eye, briefly recapitulated the accusation.

Not at first did Billy take it in. When he did the rose-tan of his cheek looked struck as by white leprosy. He stood like one impaled and gagged. Meanwhile the accuser's eyes, removing not as yet from the blue-dilated ones, underwent a phenomenal change: their wonted rich violet colour blurring into a muddy purple. Those lights of human intelligence losing human expression, gelidly protruding like the alien eyes of certain uncatalogued creatures of the deep.

The first mesmeric glance was one of surprised fascination, the last was the hungry lurch of the torpedo fish.

Speak, man! said Captain Vere to the transfixed one struck by his aspect even more than by Claggart's. Speak! defend yourself. Which appeal caused but a strange dumb gesturing and gurgling in Billy—amazement at such an accusation so suddenly sprung on inexperienced nonage, this and it may be horror at the accuser, serving to bring out his lurking defect, and in this in-

stance for the time intensifying it into a convulsed tongue tie, while the intent head and entire form straining forward in an agony of ineffectual eagerness to obey the injunction to speak and defend himself, gave an expression to the face like that of a condemned vestal priestess in the moment of her being buried alive, and in the first struggle against suffocation

Though at the time Captain Vere was quite ignorant of Billy's liability to vocal impediment, he now immediately divined it, since vividly Billy's aspect recalled to him that of a bright young schoolmate of his whom he had seen struck by much the same startling impotence in the act of eagerly rising in the class to be foremost in response to a testing question put to it by the master. Going close up to the young sailor, and laying a soothing hand on his shoulder, he said, 'There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time, take your time.' Contrary to the effect intended, these words so fatherly in tone, doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick, prompted yet more violent efforts at utterance—efforts soon ending for the time in confirming the paralysis, and bringing to the face an expression which was as a crucifixion to behold. The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night—his right arm shot out and Claggart dropped to the deck. Whether intentionally, or but owing to the young athlete's superior height, the blow had taken effect full upon the forehead, so shapely and intellectual looking a feature in the Master at arms, so that the body fell over lengthwise, like a heavy plank tilted from erectness. A gasp or two and he lay motionless.

Fated boy breathed Captain Vere in a tone so low as to be almost a whisper, 'what have you done! But here, help me.'

The twain raised the felled one from the loins up into a sitting position. The spare form flexibly acquiesced, but inertly. It was like handling a dead snake. They lowered it back. Regaining erectness, Captain Vere with one hand covering his face stood to all appearance as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking in all the bearings of the event, and what was best not only now at once to be done, but also in the sequel? Slowly he uncovered his face forthwith the effect was as if the moon, emerging from eclipse, should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father

in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian. In his official tone he bade the foretopman retire to a stateroom aft (pointing it out), and there remain till thence summoned. This order Billy in silence mechanically obeyed. Then, going to the cabin door where it opened on the quarter deck, Captain Vere said to the sentry without, Tell somebody to send Albert here. When the lad appeared his master so contrived it that he should not catch sight of the prone one. Albert, he said to him, tell the surgeon I wish to see him. You need not come back till called.

When the surgeon entered—a self-poised character of that grave sense and experience that hardly anything could take him aback—Captain Vere advanced to meet him, thus unconsciously interrupting his view of Claggut and interrupting the other's wonted ceremonious salutation, said, Nay, tell me how it is with yonder man, directing his attention to the prostrate one.

The surgeon looked, and for all his self-command, somewhat started at the abrupt revelation. On Claggart's always pallid complexion thick black blood was now oozing from mouth and ear. To the gazer's professional eyes it was unmistakably no living man that he saw.

Is it so, then? said Captain Vere intently watching him. I thought it. But verify it. Whereupon the customary tests confirmed the surgeon's first glance, who now looking up in unfeigned concern cast a look of intense inquisitiveness upon his superior. But Captain Vere, with one hand to his brow, was standing motionless. Suddenly catching the surgeon's arm convulsively, he exclaimed pointing down to the body,—It is the divine judgment of Ananias! Look!

Disturbed by the excited manner he had never before observed in the *Indomitable's* Captain, and as yet wholly ignorant of the affair, the prudent surgeon nevertheless held his peace, only again looking in earnest interrogation as to what it was that had resulted in such a tragedy.

But Captain Vere was now again motionless, standing absorbed in thought. Once again starting, he vehemently exclaimed—Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!

At these interjections, incoherences to the listener as yet un-

apprised of the antecedent events the surgeon was profoundly discomfited. But now, as recollecting himself Captain Vere in less harsh tone briefly related the circumstances leading up to the event.

But come, we must despatch, he added, help me to remove him (meaning the body) to yonder compartment —designating one opposite where the foretopman remained immured. Anew disturbed by a request that, as implying a desire for secrecy, seemed unaccountably strange to him, there was nothing for the subordinate to do but comply.

Go now, said Captain Vere, with something of his wonted manner, Co now I shall presently call a drum head court. Tell the lieutenants what has happened and tell Mr Morton —meaning the captain of marines. And charge them to keep the matter to themselves.

Full of disquietude and misgivings the surgeon left the cabin. Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind, or was it but a transient excitement brought about by so strange and extraordinary a happening? As to the drum head court, it struck the surgeon as impolitic if nothing more. The thing to do, he thought was to place Billy Budd in confinement and in a way dictated by usage, and postpone further action in so extraordinary a case to such time as they should again join the squadron, and then transfer it to the Admiral. He recalled the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his exciting exclamations so at variance with his normal manner. Was he unhinged? But assuming that he was it were not so susceptible of proof. What then could he do? No worse trying situation is conceivable than that of an officer subordinated under a captain whom he suspects to be, not mad indeed, but yet not quite unaffected in his intellect. To argue his order to him would be insolence. To resist him would be mutiny. In obedience to Captain Vere he communicated to the lieutenants and captain of marines what had happened, saying nothing as to the Captain's state. They stared at him in surprise and concern. Like him they seemed to think that such a matter should be reported to the Admiral.

Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the differ-

ence of the colour, but where exactly does the first one visibly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity. In pronounced cases there is no question about them. But in some cases, in various degrees supposedly less pronounced, to draw the line of demarcation few will undertake, though for a fee some professional experts will. There is nothing namable but that some men will undertake to do for pay. In other words there are instances where it is next to impossible to determine whether a man is sane or beginning to be otherwise.

Whether Captain Vere, as the surgeon professionally surmised, was really the sudden victim of any degree of aberration, one must determine for himself by such light as this narrative may afford.

CHAPTER XVIII

The unhappy event which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture. For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections, an after time very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea commander two qualities not readily interfusible—prudence and rigour. Moreover, there was something crucial in the case.

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the *Indomitable* and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt, personified in Claggart and Budd, in effect changed places.

In the legal view the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless, and the indisputable deed of the latter, navally regarded, constituted the most heinous of military crimes. Yet more. The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea commander, inasmuch as he was authorized to determine the matter on that primitive legal basis.

Small wonder then that the *Indomitable's* Captain, though in general a man of rigid decision, felt that circumspectness not less than promptitude was necessary. Until he could decide upon his course, and in each detail, and not only so, but until the conclud-

ing measure was upon the point of being enacted he deemed it advisable, in view of all the circumstances, to guard as much as possible against publicity. Here he may or may not have erred. Certain it is, however, that subsequently in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun rooms and cabins he was not a little criticized by some officers—a fact imputed by his friends, and vehemently by his cousin Jack Denton—to professional jealousy of Starry Vere. Some imaginative ground for invidious comment there was. The maintenance of secrecy in the matter, the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred—the quarter-deck cabin, in these particulars lurked some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian, great chiefly by his crimes.

The case was such that fain would the *Indomitable's* Captain have deferred taking any action whatever respecting it further than to keep the foretopman a close prisoner till the ship rejoined the squadron, and then submitting the matter to the judgment of his Admiral.

But a true military officer is, in one particular, like a true monk. Not with more of self abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial duty.

Feeling that unless quick action were taken on it, the deed of the foretopman, as soon as it should be known on the gun decks, would tend to awaken any slumbering embers of the Nore among the crews—a sense of the urgency of the case overruled in Captain Vere all other considerations. But though a conscientious disciplinarian, he was no lover of authority for mere authority's sake. Very far was he from embracing opportunities for monopolizing to himself the perils of moral responsibility, none at least that could properly be referred to an official superior, or shared with him by his official equals or even subordinates. So thinking he was glad it would not be at variance with usage to turn the matter over to a summary court of his own officers, reserving to himself as the one on whom the ultimate accountability would rest, the right of maintaining a supervision of it, or formally or informally interposing at need. Accordingly a drum-head court was

summarily convened, he electing the individuals composing it, the First Lieutenant, the Captain of Marines, and the Sailing Master

In associating an officer of marines with the sea lieutenants in a case having to do with a sailor, the Commander perhaps deviated from general custom. He was prompted thereto by the circumstances that he took that soldier to be a judicious person, thoughtful and not altogether incapable of grappling with a difficult case unprecedented in his prior experience. Yet even as to him he was not without some latent misgiving for withal he was an extremely good natured man, an enjoyer of his dinner, a sound sleeper and inclined to obesity. The sort of man who though he would always maintain his manhood in battle might not prove altogether reliable in a moral dilemma involving aught of the tragic. As to the First Lieutenant and the Sailing Master, Captain Vere could not but be aware that though honest natures, of approved gallantry upon occasion their intelligence was mostly confined to the matter of active seamanship, and the fighting demands of their profession. The court was held in the same cabin where the unfortunate affair had taken place. This cabin, the Commander's, embraced the entire area under the poop deck. Aft and on either side, was a small state-room—the one room temporarily a jail and the other a dead house—and a yet smaller compartment leaving a space between, expanding forward into a goodly oblong of length coinciding with the ship's beam. A skylight of moderate dimension was overhead and at each end of the oblong space were two sashed port hole windows easily convertible back into embrasures for short cannonades.

All being quickly in readiness Billy Budd was arraigned, Captain Vere necessarily appearing as the sole witness in the case and as such temporarily sinking his rank, though singularly maintaining it in a matter apparently trivial, namely that he testified from the ship's weather side with that object having caused the court to sit on the lee side. Concisely he narrated all that had led up to the catastrophe, omitting nothing in Claggart's accusation and deposing as to the manner in which the prisoner had received it. At this testimony the three officers glanced with no little surprise at Billy Budd the last man they would have suspected,

either of mutinous design alleged by Claggart or of the undenia-
ble deed he himself had done The First Lieutenant, taking ju-
dicial primacy and turning towards the prisoner, said, Captain
Vere has spoken Is it or is it not as Captain Vere says? In re-
sponse came syllables not so much impeded in the utterance as
might have been anticipated They were these

Captain Vere tells the truth It is just as Captain Vere says
but it is not as the Master-at-arms said I have eaten the King's
bread and I am true to the King

I believe you, my man, said the witness, his voice indicating
a suppressed emotion not otherwise betrayed

God will bless you for that, your honour! not without stam-
mering said Billy, and all but broke down But immediately was
recalled to self control by another question, with which the
same emotional difficulty of utterance came No, there was no
malice between us I never bore malice against the Master-at-
arms I am sorry that he is dead I did not mean to kill him
Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him But
he foully lied to my face, and in the presence of my Captain, and
I had to say something and I could only say it with a blow God
help me!

In the impulsive above-board manner of the frank one the court
saw confirmed all that was implied in words which just previously
had perplexed them, coming as they did from the testifier to the
tragedy, and promptly following Billy's impassioned disclaimer
of mutinous intent—Captain Vere's words, I believe you, my
man

Next it was asked of him whether he knew of or suspected
aught savouring of incipient trouble (meaning a mutiny though
the explicit term was avoided) going on in any section of the
ship's company

The reply lingered This was naturally imputed by the court
to the same vocal embarrassment which had retarded or ob-
structed previous answers But in main it was otherwise here, the
question immediately recalling to Billy's mind the interview with
the afterguardsman in the fore chains But an innate repugnance
to playing a part at all approaching that of an informer against
one's own shipmates—the same erring sense of uninstructed hon-

our which had stood in the way of his reporting the matter at the time, though as a loyal man of war's man it was incumbent on him and failure so to do charged against him and, proven, would have subjected him to the heaviest of penalties. This with the blind feeling now his, that nothing really was being hatched, prevailing with him. When the answer came it was a negative.

One question more, said the officer of marines now first speaking and with a troubled earnestness. You tell us that what the Master-at arms said against you was a lie. Now why should he have so lied, so maliciously lied, since you declare there was no malice between you?

At that question unintentionally touching on a spiritual sphere wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts, he was nonplussed, evincing a confusion indeed that some observers, such as can be imagined would have construed into involuntary evidence of hidden guilt. Nevertheless he strove some way to answer, but all at once relinquished the vain endeavour, at the same time turning an appealing glance towards Captain Vere as deeming him his best helper and friend. Captain Vere, who had been seated for a time, rose to his feet, addressing the interrogator. The question you put to him comes naturally enough. But can he rightly answer it?—or anybody else? unless indeed it be he who lies within there, designating the compartment where lay the corpse. But the prone one there will not rise to our summons. In effect though, as it seems to me, the point you make is hardly material. Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the Master at arms, and irrespective of the provocation of the blow, a martial court must needs in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequence is to be deemed not other wise than as the striker's deed!

This utterance, the full significance of which it was not at all likely that Billy took in, nevertheless caused him to turn a wistful, interrogative look towards the speaker, a look in its dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence. Not was the same utterance without marked effect upon the three officers, more especially the soldier. Couched in it seemed to them

a meaning unanticipated, involving a prejudgment on the speaker's part. It served to augment a mental disturbance previously evident enough.

The soldier once more spoke, in a tone of suggestive dubiety addressing at once his associates and Captain Vere. Nobody is present—none of the ship's company, I mean, who might shed lateral light, if any is to be had, upon what remains mysterious in this matter.

That is thoughtfully put, said Captain Vere, I see your drift. Ay, there is a mystery, but to use a Scriptural phrase, it is a mystery of iniquity—a matter for only psychologic theologians to discuss. But what has a military court to do with it? Not to add that for us any possible investigation of it is cut off by the lasting tongue-tie of him in yonder, again designating the mortuary state room. The prisoner's deed. With that alone we have to do.

To this, and particularly the closing reiteration, the marine soldier, knowing not how aptly to reply, sadly abstained from saying aught. The First Lieutenant, who at the outset had not unnaturally assumed primacy in the court, now overrulingly instructed by a glance from Captain Vere (a glance more effective than words), resumed that primacy. Turning to the prisoner

Budd, he said, and scarce in equable tones, Budd, if you have aught further to say for yourself, say it now.

Upon this the young sailor turned another quick glance towards Captain Vere, then, as taking a hint from that aspect—a hint confirming his own instinct that silence was now best, replied to the Lieutenant, I have said all, Sir.

The marine—the same who had been the sentinel without the cabin door at the time that the foretopman, followed by the Master-at-arms, entered it—he, standing by the sailor throughout their judicial proceedings, was now directed to take him back to the after compartment originally assigned to the prisoner and his custodian. As the twain disappeared from view, the three officers, as partially liberated from some inward constraint associated with Billy's mere presence—simultaneously stirred in their seats. They exchanged looks of troubled indecision, yet feeling that decide they must, and without long delay, for Captain Vere was for the time sitting unconsciously with his back towards

them, apparently in one of his absent fits gazing out from a sashed port hole to windward upon the monotonous blank of the twilight sea. But the court's silence continuing, broken only at moments by brief consultations in low earnest tones, this seemed to assure him and encourage him. Turning, he to and-fro paced the cabin athwart, in the returning ascent to windward, climbing the slant deck in the ship's lee roll, without knowing it symbolizing thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against primitive instincts strong as the wind and the sea. Presently he came to a stand before the three. After scanning their faces he stood less as mustering his thoughts for expression, than as one in deliberating how best to put them to well-meaning men not intellectually mature—men with whom it was necessary to demonstrate certain principles that were axioms to himself. Similar impatience as to talking is perhaps one reason that deters some minds from addressing any popular assemblies, under which head is to be classed most legislatures in a Democracy.

When speak he did, something both in the substance of what he said and his manner of saying it showed the influence of unshared studies, modifying and tempering the practical training of an active career. This, along with his phraseology now and then, was suggestive of the grounds whereon rested that imputation of a certain pedantry socially alleged against him by certain naval men of wholly practical cast, captains who nevertheless would frankly concede that His Majesty's navy mustered no more efficient officers of their grade than *Starry Vere*.

What he said was to this effect. Hitherto I have been but the witness, little more, and I should hardly think now to take another tone, that of your coadjutor, for the time, did I not perceive in you—at the crisis too—a troubled hesitancy, proceeding, I doubt not, from the clashing of military duty with moral scruple—scruple vitalized by compassion. For the compassion, how can I otherwise but share it. But, mindful of paramount obligation I strive against scruples that may tend to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen, that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here, acting not as casuists or moralists it is a case practical and under martial law practically to be dealt with.

But your scruples! Do they move as in a dusk? Challenge them Make them advance and declare themselves Come now—do they import something like this If, mindless of palliating circumstances, we are bound to regard the death of the Master at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one? But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent Well, I, too, feel that, the full force of that It is Nature But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free-agents When war is declared, are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command If our judgments approve the war, that is but coincidence So in other particulars So now, would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigour of it, we are not responsible Our vowed responsibility is in this That however pitilessly that law may operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it

But the exceptional in the matter moves the heart within you Even so, too, is mine moved But let not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool Ashore in a criminal case will an upright judge allow himself when off the bench to be waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch him with her tearful plea? Well, the heart here is as that piteous woman The heart is the feminine in man, and hard though it be, she must here be ruled out

He paused, earnestly studying them for a moment, then resumed

But something in your aspect seems to urge that it is not solely that heart that moves in you, but also the conscience, the private conscience Then, tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one

formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?

Here the three men moved in their seats, less convinced than agitated by the course of an argument troubling but the more the spontaneous conflict within. Perceiving which the speaker paused for a moment, then abruptly changing his tone, went on:

To steady us a bit, let us recur to the facts—In war time at sea a man-of-war's man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills. Apart from its effect, the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. Furthermore—

Ay, Sir, emotionally broke in the officer of marines, in one sense it was. But surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homicide.

Surely not, my good man. And before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one that plea would largely exonerate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His Majesty's service—in this ship indeed—there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience for aught we know. Though as their fellow-creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as navy officers, what reck we of it? Still less reck the enemy. Our impressed men he would fain cut down in the same swath with our volunteers. As regards the enemy's naval conscripts, some of whom may even share our own abhorrence of the regicidal French Directory, it is the same on our side. War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose.

But while, put to it by those anxieties in you which I cannot but respect, I only repeat myself—while thus strangely we prolong proceedings that should be summary, the enemy may be sighted and an engagement result. We must do, and one of two things must we do—condemn or let go.

Can we not convict and yet mitigate the penalty? asked the Junior Lieutenant here speaking, and falteringly, for the first time.

‘Lieutenant, were that clearly lawful for us under the circumstances, consider the consequences of such clemency. The people (meaning the ship’s company) have native sense, most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition, and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which our official position forbids—they, long moulded by arbitrary discipline, have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate. No, to the people the foretopman’s deed, however it be worded in the announcement, will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. *Why?* they will ruminate. You know what sailors are. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the *Nore*? Ay, they know the well founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practising a lawful rigour singularly demanded at this juncture lest it should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part and how deadly to discipline. You see then whither, prompted by duty and the law, I steadfastly drive. But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid.

With that, crossing the deck, he resumed his place by the sashed port hole, tacitly leaving the three to come to a decision. On the cabins opposite side the troubled court sat silent. Loyal lieges, plain and practical, though at bottom they dissented from some points Captain Vere had put to them, they were without the faculty, hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man—one, too, not less their superior in mind than in naval rank. But it is not improbable that even such of his words as were not without influence over them, less came home to them than his closing appeal to their instinct as sea-officers, in the forethought he threw out as to the practical consequences to discipline (considering the unconfirmed tone of the fleet at the time)—should a man-of-war’s man’s violent killing at sea of a

superior in grade be allowed to pass for aught else than a capital crime, demanding prompt infliction of the penalty?

Not unlikely they were brought to something more or less akin to that harassed frame of mind which in the year 1842 actuated the commander of the U S brig of war *Somers* to resolve (under the so called Articles of War—Articles modelled upon the English Mutiny Act) to resolve upon the execution at sea of a midshipman and two petty-officers as mutineers designing the seizure of the brig Which resolution was carried out though in a time of peace and within not many days sail of home An act vindicated by a naval court of inquiry subsequently convened ashore—history, and here cited without comment True, the circumstances on board the *Somers* were different from those on board the *Indomitable* But the urgency felt, well-warranted or otherwise, was much the same

Says a writer whom few know, Forty years after a battle it is easy for a non combatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought It is another thing personally and under fire to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it Much so with respect to other emergencies involving considerations both practical and moral, and when it is imperative promptly to act The greater the fog the more it imperils the steamer, and speed is put on though at the hazard of running somebody down Little ween the snug card players in the cabin of the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge

In brief, Billy Budd was formally convicted and sentenced to be hung at the yard arm in the early morning-watch, it being now night Otherwise, as is customary in such cases, the sentence would forthwith have been carried out In war time on the field or in the fleet, a mortal punishment decreed by a drum head court—on the field sometimes decreed by but a nod from the general—follows without a delay on the heel of conviction without appeal

CHAPTER XIX

It was Captain Vere himself who, of his own motion, communicated the finding of the court to the prisoner, for that purpose

going to the compartment where he was in custody, and bidding the marine there to withdraw for the time

Beyond the communication of the sentence, what took place at this interview was never known. But, in view of the character of the twain briefly closeted in that state room, each radically sharing in the rarer qualities of one nature—so rare, indeed, as to be all but incredible to average minds however much cultivated—some conjectures may be ventured.

It would have been in consonance with the spirit of our Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one—should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself had played in bringing about the decision, at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy indeed he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his Captain making such a confidant of him. Nor as to the sentence itself could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die. Even more may have been Captain Vere in the end may have developed the passion sometimes latent under an exterior stoical or indifferent. He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity, may in the end have caught Billy to heart even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest. But there is no telling the sacrament—seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world wherever under circumstances at all akin to those here attempted to be set forth—two of great Nature's nobler order embrace. There is privacy at the time, inviolable to the survivor, and holy oblivion (the sequel to each diviner magnanimity) providentially covers all at last.

The first to encounter Captain Vere in the act of leaving the compartment was the Senior Lieutenant. The face he beheld, for the moment one expressive of the agony of the strong, was to that officer, though a man of fifty, a startling revelation. That the



condemned one suffered less than he who mainly had effected the condemnation was apparently indicated by the former's exclamation in the scene soon perforce to be touched upon

Of a series of incidents within a brief term rapidly following each other, the adequate narration may take up a term less brief, especially if explanation or comment here and there seem requisite to the better understanding of such incidents. Between the entrance into the cabin of him who never left it alive, and him who when he did leave it left it as one condemned to die, between this and the closeted interview just given, less than an hour and a half had elapsed. It was an interval long enough, however, to awaken speculations among no few of the ship's company as to what it was that could be detaining in the cabin the Master-at-arms and the sailor for it was rumoured that both of them had been seen to enter it and neither of them had been seen to emerge. This rumour had got abroad upon the gun decks and in the tops, the people of a great war ship being in one respect like villagers, taking microscopic note of every untoward movement or non-movement going on. When therefore in weather not at all tempestuous all hands were called in the second dog watch, a summons under such circumstances not usual in those hours, the crew were not wholly unprepared for some announcement extraordinary, one having connection, too, with the continued absence of the two men from their wonted haunts.

There was a moderate sea at the time, and the moon, newly risen and near to being at its full, silvered the white spar deck wherever not blotted by the clear cut shadows horizontally thrown of fixtures and moving men. On either side of the quarter deck the marine guard under arms was drawn up, and Captain Vere, standing up in his place surrounded by all the ward room officers, addressed his men. In so doing his manner showed neither more nor less than that properly pertaining to his supreme position aboard his own ship. In clear terms and concise he told them what had taken place in the cabin, that the Master at arms was dead, that he who had killed him had been already tried by a summary court and condemned to death, and that the execution would take place in the early morning watch. The word *mutiny*

was not named in what he said. He refrained too, from making the occasion an opportunity for any preachment as to the maintenance of discipline, thinking, perhaps, that under existing circumstances in the navy the consequence of violating discipline should be made to speak for itself.

Their Captain's announcement was listened to by the throng of standing sailors in a dumbness like that of a seated congregation of believers in Hell listening to the clergyman's announcement of his Calvinistic text.

At the close, however, a confused murmur went up. It began to wax all but instantly, then, at a sign, was pierced and suppressed by shrill whistles of the boatswain and his mates piping down one watch.

To be prepared for burial Claggart's body was delivered to certain petty officers of his mess. And here, not to clog the sequel with lateral matters, it may be added that at a suitable hour, the Master at arms was committed to the sea with every funeral honour properly belonging to his naval grade.

In this proceeding, as in every public one growing out of the tragedy, strict adherence to usage was observed. Nor in any point could it have been at all deviated from, either with respect to Claggart or Billy Budd, without begetting undesirable speculations in the ship's company, the sailors, and more particularly the men of war's men, being of all men the greatest sticklers for usage.

For similar cause all communications between Captain Vere and the condemned one ended with the closeted interview already given, the latter being now surrendered to the ordinary routine preliminary to the end. This transfer under guard from the Captain's quarters was effected without unusual precautions—at least no visible ones.

If possible, not to let the men so much as surmise that their officers anticipate aught amiss from them is the tacit rule in a military ship. And the more that some sort of trouble should really be apprehended, the more do the officers keep that apprehension to themselves, though not the less unostentatious vigilance may be augmented.

In the present instance the sentry placed over the prisoner had

strict orders to let no one have communication with him but the Chaplain And certain unobtrusive measures were taken absolutely to insure this point

CHAPTER XX

In a seventy four of the old order the deck known as the upper gun deck was the one covered by the spar deck, which last, though not without its armament, was for the most part exposed to the weather In general it was at all hours free from hammocks, those of the crew swinging on the lower gun deck, and berth deck, the latter being not only a dormitory but also the place for the stowing of the sailors bags, and on both sides lined with the large chests or movable pantries of the many messes of the men

On the starboard side of the *Indomitable's* upper gun deck, behold Billy Budd under sentry lying prone in irons in one of the bays formed by the regular spacing of the guns comprising the batteries on either side All these pieces were of the heavier calibre of that period Mounted on lumbering wooden carriages they were hampered with cumbersome harness of breeching and strong side tackles for running them out Guns and carriages, together with the long rammers and shorter lint stocks lodged in loops overhead—all these, as customary, were painted black and the heavy hempen breechings tarred to the same tint, wore the like livery of the undertakers In contrast with the funereal tone of these surrounding the prone sailor's exterior apparel, white *jumper* and white duck trousers, each more or less soiled dimly glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discoloured snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth In effect he is already in his shroud or the garments that shall serve him in lieu of one Over him, but scarce illuminating him, two battle lanterns swing from two massive beams of the deck above Fed with the oil supplied by the war contractors (whose gains, honest or otherwise, are in every land an anticipated portion of the harvest of death), with flickering splashes of dirty yellow light they pollute the pale moonshine all but ineffectually struggling in obstructed flecks through the open ports from which the

tamponed cannon protrude Other lanterns at intervals serve but to bring out somewhat the obscurer bays which, like small confessionals or side-chapels in a cathedral, branch from the long, dim vasted, broad aisle between the two batteries of that covered tire

Such was the deck where now lay the Handsome Sailor Through the rose tan of his complexion, no pallor could have shown It would have taken days of sequestration from the winds and the sun to have brought about the effacement of that young sea bloom But the skeleton in the cheek bone at the point of its angle was just beginning delicately to be defined under the warm tinted skin In fervid hearts self contained some brief experiences devour our human tissue as secret fire in a ship's hold consumes cotton in the bale

But now, lying between the two guns, as nipped in the vice of fate, Billy's agony, mainly proceeding from a generous young heart's virgin experience of the diabolical incarnate and effective in some men—the tension of that agony was over now It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere Without movement, he lay as in a trance, that adolescent expression previously noted as his, taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle when the warm hearth glow of the still chamber of night plays on the dimples that at whiles mysteriously form in the cheek silently coming and going there For now and then in the gyved one's trance, a serene happy light born of some wandering reminiscence or dream would diffuse itself over his face, and then wane away only anew to return

The Chaplain coming to see him and finding him thus, and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence, attentively regarded him for a space, then slipping aside, withdrew for the time, peradventure feeling that even he, the minister of Christ, though receiving his stipend from wars, had no consolation to proffer which could result in a peace transcending that which he beheld But in the small hours he came again And the prisoner, now awake to his surroundings, noticed his approach, and civilly, all but cheerfully, welcomed him But it was to little purpose that in the interview following the good man sought to bring Billy Budd to some godly understanding that he must die, and at

dawn True, Billy himself freely referred to his death as a thing close at hand but it was something in the way that children refer to death in general, who yet among their other sports will play a funeral with hearse and mourners Not that like children Billy was incapable of conceiving what death really is No but he was wholly without irrational fear of it, a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than those so called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterate Nature And, as else where said, a barbarian Billy radically was, as much so, for all the costume, as his countrymen the British captives, living trophies made to march in the Roman triumph of Germanicus Quite as much so as those later barbarians, young men probably and picked specimens among the earlier British converts to Christianity, at least nominally such, and taken to Rome (as to day converts from lesser isles of the sea may be taken to London) of whom the Pope of that time, admiring the strangeness of their personal beauty—so unlike the Italian stamp, their clear, ruddy complexions and curled flaxen locks, exclaimed, *Angles* (meaning in English the modern derivative)—*Angels* do you call them? And is it because they look so like *angels*? Had it been later in time one would think that the Pope had in mind Fra Angelico's seraphs, some of whom, plucking apples in gardens of Hesperides, have the faint rose bud complexion of the more beautiful English girls

CHAPTER XXI

If in vain the kind Chaplain sought to impress the young barbarian with ideas of death akin to those conveyed in the skull, dial and cross bones on old tombstones, equally futile to all appearances were his efforts to bring home to him the thought of salvation and a Saviour Billy listened, but less out of awe or reverence, perhaps, than from a certain natural politeness, doubtless at bottom regarding all that in much the same way which most mariners of his class take any discourse abstract or out of the common tone of the workaday world And this sailor way of taking clerical discourse is not wholly unlike the way in which the pioneer of Christianity—full of transcendent miracles—was received

long ago on tropic isles by any superior *savage* so called a Tahitian say of Captain Cook's time or shortly after that time. Out of natural courtesy he received but did not appreciate. It was like a gift placed in the palm of an outstretched hand upon which the fingers do not close.

But the *Indomitable's* Chaplain was a discreet man possessing the good sense of a good heart. So he insisted not in his vocation here. At the instance of Captain Vere, a lieutenant had apprised him of pretty much of everything as to Billy, and since he felt that innocence was even a better thing than religion wherewith to go to judgment, he reluctantly withdrew, but in his emotion not without performing an act strange enough in an Englishman, and under the circumstances yet more so in any regular priest. Stooping over he kissed on the fair cheek his fellowman, a felon in martial law, one who, though in the confines of death, he felt he could never convert to a dogma, nor for all that did he fear for his future.

Marvel not that, having been made acquainted with the young sailor's essential innocence, the worthy man lifted not a finger to avert the doom of such a martyr to martial discipline. So to do would not only have been as idle as invoking the desert, but would also have been an audacious transgression of the bounds of his function—one as exactly prescribed to him by military law as that of any other naval officer. Bluntly put, a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War—Mars. As such, he is as incongruous as a musket would be on the altar at Christmas. Why then is he there? Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon, because, too, he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but force.*

CHAPTER XXII

The night so luminous on the spar deck, but otherwise on the cavernous ones below—levels so very like the tiered galleries in a coal mine—the luminous night passed away. Like the prophet in the chariot disappearing in heaven and dropping his mantle to

* Melville notes on this passage: An irruption of heretic thought hard to suppress.

Elisha, the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the peeping day. A meek shy light appeared in the East, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapour. That light slowly waxed. Suddenly *one bell* was struck aft, responded to by one louder metallic stroke from forward. It was four o'clock in the morning. Instantly the silver whistles were heard summoning all hands to witness punishment. Up through the great hatchway rimmed with racks of heavy shot, the watch below came pouring, overspreading with the watch already on deck the space between the mainmast and foremast, including that occupied by the capacious *launch* and the black booms tiered on either side of it—boat and booms making a summit of observation for the powder boys and younger tars. A different group comprising one watch of topmen leaned over the side of the rail of that sea balcony, no small one in a seventy-four, looking down on the crowd below. Man or boy, none spake but in whisper, and few spake at all. Captain Vere—as before, the central figure among the assembled commissioned officers—stood nigh the break of the poop-deck, facing forward. Just below him on the quarter deck the marines in full equipment were drawn up much as at the scene of the promulgated sentence.

At sea in the old time, the execution by halter of a military sailor was generally from the fore yard. In the present instance—for special reasons—the main-yard was assigned. Under an arm of that yard the prisoner was presently brought up. The Chaplain attending him. It was noted at the time, and remarked upon afterwards, that in this final scene the good man evinced little or nothing of the perfunctory. Brief speech indeed he had with the condemned one, but the genuine gospel was less on his tongue than in his aspect and manner towards him. The final preparations personal to the latter being speedily brought to an end by two boatswain's-mates, the consummation impended. Billy stood facing aft. At the penultimate moment, his words, his only ones, words wholly unobstructed in the utterance, were these—

God bless Captain Vere! Syllables so unanticipated coming from one with the ignominious hemp about his neck—a conventional felon's benediction directed aft towards the quarters of honour, syllables, too, delivered in the clear melody of a singing-bird on

the point of launching from the twig, had a phenomenal effect, not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor, spiritualized now through late experiences so poignantly profound

Without volition, as it were, as if indeed the ship's populace were the vehicles of some vocal electric current, with one voice, from aloft and aloft, came a resonant echo— God bless Captain Vere! And yet, at that instant, Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as he was in their eyes

At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them, Captain Vere, either through stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship-armour's rack

The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward, was just regaining an even keel—when the last signal, the preconcerted dumb one, was given At the same moment it chanced that the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east was shot through with a soft glow as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended, and ascending, took the full rose of the dawn

In the pinioned figure, arrived at the yard end, to the wonder of all no motion was apparent save that created by the slow roll of the hull, in moderate weather so majestic in a great ship heavily-cannoned

A Digression

When, some days afterwards, in reference to the singularity just mentioned, the Purser (a rather ruddy, rotund person, more accurate as an accountant than profound as a philosopher) said at mess to the Surgeon What testimony to the force lodged in will power, the latter, spare and tall one in whom a discreet causticity went along with a manner less genial than polite, replied, Your pardon, Mr Purser In a hanging so scientifically conducted—and, under special orders, I myself directed how Budd's was to be effected—any movement following the completed suspension and originating in the body suspended, such movement indicates mechanical spasm in the muscular system Hence the absence of

that is no more attributable to will-power, as you call it, than to horse power—begging your pardon

But this muscular spasm you speak of—is not that, in a degree, more or less invariable in these cases?

Assuredly so, Mr Purser

How then, my good sir, do you account for its absence in this instance?

Mr Purser, it is clear that your sense of the singularity in this matter equals not mine. You account for it by what you call will power, a term not yet included in the lexicon of science. As for me, I do not with my present knowledge pretend to account for it at all. Even should one assume the hypothesis that, at the first touch of the halcyons, the action of Budd's heart, intensified by extraordinary emotion at its climax, abruptly stopped—much like a watch when in carelessly winding it up you strain at the finish, thus snapping the spring—even under that hypothesis, how account for the phenomenon that followed?

You admit, then, that the absence of spasmodic movement was phenomenal?

It was phenomenal, Mr Purser, in the sense that it was an appearance, the cause of which is not immediately to be assigned.

But tell me, my dear Sir, pertinaciously continued the other, was the man's death effected by the halter, or was it a species of euthanasia?

Euthanasia, Mr Purser is something like your will-power, I doubt its authenticity as a scientific term—begging your pardon again. It is at once imaginative and metaphysical, in short, Greek. But, abruptly changing his tone, there is a case in the sick bay which I do not care to leave to my assistants. Begging your pardon, but excuse me. And rising from the mess he formally withdrew.

CHAPTER XXIII

The silence at the moment of execution, and for a moment or two continuing thereafter (but emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull, or the flutter of a sail caused by the helmsman's eyes being tempted astray), this emphasized silence was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to be here verbally

rendered Whoever has heard the freshest wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains, showers not shared by the plain, whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods may form some conception of the sound now heard The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness, since it came from close by even from the men massed on the ship's open deck Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further in that it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to—in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamour it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness

Pipe down the starboard watch, Boatswain, and see that they go'

Shrill as the shriek of the sea hawk the whistles of the boat swain and his mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it, and yielding to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one half For the remainder most of them were set to temporary employments connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be found upon occasion by any officer of the-deck

Now each proceeding that follows a mortal sentence pronounced at sea by a drum head court is characterized by a promptitude not perceptibly merging into hurry, though bordering that The hammock—the one which had been Billy's bed when alive, having already been ballasted with shot and otherwise prepared to serve for his canvas coffin—the last offices of the sea-under-takers the sail maker's mates, were now speedily completed When everything was in readiness, a second call for all hands, made necessary by the strategic movement before mentioned, was sounded, and now to witness burial

The details of this closing formality it needs not to give But when the tilted plank let slide its freight into the sea, a second strange human murmur was heard—blended now with another so inarticulate sound proceeding from certain larger sea fowl,

whose attention having been attracted by the peculiar commotion in the water resulting from the heavy sloped dive of the shotted hammock into the sea, flew screaming to the spot. So near the hull did they come, that the stridor or bony creak of their gaunt double jointed pinions was audible. As the ship under light airs passed on, leaving the burial spot astern, they still kept circling it low down with the moving shadow of their outstretched wings and the cracked requiem of their cries.

Upon sailors as superstitious as those of the age preceding ours—all men of war's men, too, who had just beheld the prodigy of repose in the form suspended in air and now foundering in the deeps, to such mariners the action of the sea-fowl, though dictated by a mere animal greed for prey, was big with no prosaic significance. An uncertain movement began among them, in which some encroachment was made. It was tolerated but for a moment. For suddenly the drum-beat to quarters—which familiar sound, happening at least twice every day, had upon the present occasion some signal peremptoriness in it. True martial discipline long continued superinduces in an average man a sort of impulse of docility, whose operation at the official tone of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct.

The drum beat dissolved the multitude, distributing most of them along the batteries of the two covered gun-decks. There, as wont, the gun crews stood by their respective cannon erect and silent. In due course the First Officer sword under arm and standing in his place on the quarter deck, formally received the successive reports of the sworded lieutenants commanding the sections of batteries below, the last of which reports being made the summed report he delivered with the customary salute to the Commander. All of this occupied time, which, in the present case, was the object of beating to quarters at an hour prior to the customary one. That such variance from usage was authorized by an officer like Captain Vere (a martinet as some deemed him) was evidence of the necessity for unusual action implied in what he deemed to be temporarily the mood of his men. With mankind, he would say, forms, measured forms are everything, and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus, with his lyre, spell binding the wild denizens of the woods. And thus he

once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequence thereof

At this unwonted muster at quarters, all proceeded as at the regular hour. The band on the quarter deck played a sacred air. After which the Chaplain went through with the customary morning service. That done, the drum beat the retreat, and toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline and purpose of war, the men in their wonted, orderly manner dispersed to the places allotted them when not at the guns.

And now it was full day. The fleece of low hanging vapour had vanished, licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the circumambient air in the cleanness of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer's yard.

CHAPTER XXIV

The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges, hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural final.

How it fared with the Handsome Sailor during the year of the Great Mutiny has been faithfully given. But though properly the story ends with his life, something in way of a sequel will not be amiss. Three brief chapters will suffice.

In the general re-christening under the Directory of the craft originally forming the navy of the French Monarchy, the *St Louis* line of battle ship was named the *Atheiste*. Such a name, like some other substituted ones in the Revolutionary fleet, while proclaiming the infidel audacity of the ruling power, was yet (though not so intended to be) the aptest name, if one consider it, ever given to a war ship far more so indeed, than the *Devastation* or the *Erebus* (the Hell) and similar names bestowed upon fighting ships.

On the return passage to the full English fleet from the detached cruise during which occurred the events already recorded, the *Indomitable* fell in with the *Atheiste*. An engagement ensued,

during which Captain Vere, in the act of putting his ship along side the enemy with a view of throwing his boarders across the bulwarks, was hit by a musket ball from a port hole of the enemy's main cabin. More than disabled, he dropped to the deck and was carried below to the same cock pit where some of his men already lay. The Senior Lieutenant took command. Under him the enemy was finally captured, and though much crippled was by rare good fortune successfully taken into Gibraltar, an English fort not very distant from the scene of the fight. There Captain Vere with the rest of the wounded was put ashore. He lingered for some days, but the end came. Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that, in spite of its philosophic austerity, may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions—ambition—never attained to the fulness of fame.

Not long before death, while living under the influence of that magical drug which, in soothing the physical frame, mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to murmur words inexplicable to his attendant—Billy Budd, Billy Budd. That these were not the accents of remorse, would seem clear from what the attendant said to the *Indomitable's* potent senior officer of marines, who, as the most reluctant to condemn of the members of the drum head court, too well knew (though here he kept the knowledge to himself) who Billy Budd was.

CHAPTER XXV

Some few weeks after the execution, among other matters under the main head of *News from the Mediterranean*, there appeared in one naval chronicle of the time, an authorized weekly publication, an account of the affair. It was doubtless for the most part written in good faith though the medium partly rumour, through which the facts must have reached the writer, served to deflect and in part to falsify them. The account was as follows —

On the tenth of the last month a deplorable occurrence took place on board *H M S Indomitable*. John Claggart, the ship's Master at arms, discovering that some sort of plot was incipient among an inferior section of the ship's company, and that the

ringleader was one William Budd, he, Claggart, in the act of arraigning the man before the Captain was vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath knife of Budd

The deed and the implement employed sufficiently suggest that, though mustered into the service under an English name, the assassin was no Englishman but one of those aliens adopting English cognomen whom the present extraordinary necessities of the Service have caused to be admitted into it in considerable numbers

The enormity of the crime and the extreme depravity of the criminal appear the greater in view of the character of the victim—a middle aged man, respectable and discreet, belonging to that minor official grade, the petty officers, upon whom, as none know better than the commissioned gentlemen, the efficiency of His Majesty's navy so largely depends His function was a responsible one—at once onerous and thankless—and his fidelity in it the greater because of his strong patriotic impulse In this instance, as in so many other instances in these days, the character of the unfortunate man signally refutes, if refutation were needed, that peevish saying attributed to the late Dr Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel

The criminal paid the penalty of his crime The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard the *H M S Indomitable*

The above item appearing in a publication, now long ago superannuated and forgotten in all that hitherto has stood in human record, to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd *

CHAPTER XXVI

Everything is for a season remarkable in navies Any tangible object associated with some striking incident of the service is conveyed into a monument The spar from which the foretopman was suspended was for some few years kept trace of by the blue-

* An author's note crossed out here appears in the original MS It reads Here ends a story not unwarranted in this incongruous world of ours—inno-
cence and infirmity spiritual depravity and fair spite

jackets Then knowledge followed it from ship to deck yard and again from deck yard to ship, still pursuing it even when at last reduced to a mere deck yard boom To them a chip of it was as a piece of the Cross Ignorant though they were of the real facts of the happening, and not thinking but that the penalty was unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view, for all that they instinctively felt that Billy was a sort of man as incapable of mutiny as of wilful murder They recalled the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor, that face never deformed by a sneer or subtler vile freak of the heart within! This impression of him was doubtless deepened by the fact that he was gone, and in a measure mysteriously gone On the gun decks of the *Indomitable* the general estimate of his nature and its unconscious simplicity eventually found rude utterance from another foretopman, one of his own watch, gifted as some sailors are with an artless poetic temperament Those tarry hands made some lines which, after circulating among the shipboard crew for a while, finally were rudely printed at Portsmouth as a ballad The title given to it was the sailor's own

BILLY IN THE DARBIES

*Good of the Chaplain to enter Lone Bay
And down on his marrow bones here and pray
For the likes just o me Billy Budd —But look
Through the port comes the moon shine astray!
It tips the guard's cutlass and silvers this nook
But twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day
A jewel block they'll make of me to-morrow
Pendant pearl from the yard arm end
Like the ear drop I gave to Bristol Molly—
O tis me not the sentence they'll suspend
Ay ay all is up and I must up too
Early in the morning aloft from alow
On an empty stomach now never it would do
They'll give me a nibble—but o biscuit ere I go
Sure a messmate will reach me the last parting cup
But turning heads away from the hoist and the belay
Heaven knows who will have the running of me up!
No pipe to those halyards—but aren't it all sham?*

*A blur s in my eyes it is dreaming that I am
A hatchet to my panzer³ all adrift to go³
The drum roll to grog and Billy never know³
But Donald he has promised to stand by the plan¹
So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink
But—no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think —
I remember Taff the Welshman when he sank
And his cheek it was like the budding pink
But me they'll lash me in hammock drop me deep
Fathoms down fathoms down how I'll dream fast asleep
I feel it stealing now Sentry are you there³
Just ease these darbies at the wrist
And roll me over fair
I am sleepy, and the oozy weeds about me twirl*

April 19, 1891

1924

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



Chamson, Andre (1900—)

Born in southern France of peasant, Protestant origin, Chamson had his professional training in history and geography. He has been much interested in politics, on the liberal side, and held posts under Daladier and Blum. His best known novels are *Les Hommes de la Route* (1927, English translation *The Road*, 1929) and *Le Crime des Justes* (1929, English translation *The Crime of the Just* 1930).

Chekhov, Anton (1860–1904)

Anton Chekhov, born in Taganrog, South Russia, was the son of a humble grocer who had been born a serf. In order to support himself as a medical student at the University of Moscow Chekhov wrote comic pieces for humorous magazines. After taking his degree he turned to writing as a career, and by the time of his death from tuberculosis, contracted during his university years, he had published more than a thousand stories. He also wrote five plays which were the keystone in the success and greatness of the Moscow Art Theater.

Conrad, Joseph [Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski] (1857–1924)

Joseph Conrad was born in Berdichev, Polish Ukraine, of a good family. When his father was punished for revolutionary activities, Conrad as a young boy accompanied his parents to exile to Siberia, where his mother died. He first went to sea in 1876 and became a British seaman in 1878 and a master in 1886. He sailed

widely over the earth but particularly in the East. In 1890-1891, as a captain of a river boat on the Congo, he contracted jungle fever which left him prey to ill health and nervousness the rest of his life. After 1895 he became a famous novelist in his adopted tongue. Conrad's best known works include *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Victory* (1915), novels, *Youth and Heart of Darkness* (1902), short stories, and *A Personal Record* (1912). G. Jean Aubry edited two volumes entitled *Life and Letters* in 1927.

Coppard, A. E. (1878-)

The son of a tailor, A. E. Coppard followed various trades and occupations before he went in 1907 to the city of Oxford as an accountant to an engineering firm. Here he became interested in writing, but it was not until 1921 that he published *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me*, a book of stories which excited wide and immediate attention. The five volumes which followed made Coppard one of the most popular and respected short story writers of the twenties.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821-1881)

Born in Moscow, Dostoevsky was orphaned in 1839 when his father was killed by his own servants. He was a rising young writer when he was sentenced to Siberia (four years of penal labor, four of military service) in 1849. (In fact he and his fellows were placed before a firing squad, only to be saved at the last moment by a prearranged messenger from the Czar. The whole mock execution had been a cruel joke designed to teach the victims a lesson.) The charge against him was that of circulating the famous Letter to Gogol by the critic Belinsky, and of belonging to the Petrashevsky circle—a group which was given to literary socialistic talk and writing and which was thinking of setting up a private press.

Dostoevsky returned from Siberia more conservative and more than ever a Slavophile. Hard pressed for money, he continued his literary career, writing desperately, hurriedly but not with poor construction as some have said, the novels that made him famous. 'The Grand Inquisitor' is a chapter from his masterpiece, *The*

Brothers Karamazov (1879–1880) Other important works are *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Idiot* (1868), novels, *The House of the Dead* (1861–1862), sketches of life in Siberia, *The Diary of a Writer* (1873–1874, 1876–1877, 1880) He married twice, the second time happily

Faulkner, William (1897–)

A native of Mississippi, William Faulkner seldom leaves Oxford, where his family moved while he was quite young (The exceptions are occasional trips to Hollywood) In World War I he flew in the Canadian air force and after the war returned to Oxford to attend (briefly) the state university In his early years he supported himself by a series of odd jobs and was for a short time a postmaster Among his best known works are *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), *A Fable* (1954), novels, *Dr Martino and Other Stories* (1934), which includes 'Wash In 1950 Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for his contribution to modern fiction

Hawthorne, Nathaniel (1804–1864)

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, Hawthorne was graduated from Bowdoin College in 1825 After more than ten years in lonely practice and self-discipline in writing he published *Twice Told Tales* in 1837 While serving as customs officer in Salem (1845–1849) he wrote his most famous work, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) He was named to a consular post in Liverpool, England, in 1853, and remained abroad until 1860

Hemingway, Ernest (1898–)

An American writer of novels and short stories which have earned critical and public acceptance, Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois He was a volunteer ambulance driver and later served in the Italian Army in World War I and was badly wounded in the leg While primarily a writer of serious fiction, he has never ceased entirely his journalistic career, being particularly remembered as a war correspondent during the Civil War in Spain Among his best-known novels are *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell*

Tolls (1940) In awarding him the Nobel Prize for Literature (1954), the committee especially cited his novelette, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)

James, Henry (1843-1916)

Henry James was born in New York, the son of a religious philosopher and the brother of William James, the eminent psychologist and philosopher During his childhood and youth he spent considerable time abroad After a twelve year apprenticeship as a contributor of reviews and short stories to the leading American periodicals, James published his first novel, *Roderick Hudson*, in 1876, about the time he took up his residence in England Through the next three decades he steadily wrote the many novels and stories which earned him the title of the Master The relative merits of the works of the early, middle, and late periods have been much discussed, but the beginning student might be well advised to take up *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians*, and *The Europeans* A few months before his death, James, in order to express his feeling that the United States should enter the war, became a naturalized British citizen

Joyce, James (1882-1941)

Joyce was born in Dublin and educated in Jesuit schools Even before he took a degree at University College, Dublin (1902), he had published an essay on Ibsen, whom he greatly admired Leaving Dublin in 1904 he traveled in Europe and lived in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris Despite his long, self imposed exile he made life in Ireland the subject matter of his books His first notable work was *Dubliners* (1914), but it was *Ulysses* (1922) that won him international fame His last book, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), was highly experimental in both matter and form Joyce is generally recognized as the most original and influential prose writer of his time

Kafka, Franz (1883-1924)

Born in Prague, the eldest of six children in a middle-class Jewish family, Kafka died of tuberculosis after many years of ill-

health Most of his works, including the famous novels *The Trial* (1925, English translation, 1937) and *The Castle* (1926, English translation, 1930), were published after his death under the direction of his friend Max Brod His whole life was colored by his relationship to a tyrannical father and by his inability to bring himself to marry the girl, F B, whom he first loved Other important volumes by Kafka are his diaries (English translations in 1948 and 1949), *The Great Wall of China*, a collection of stories (published in English translation in 1933), and the miscellaneous volume containing his important Letter to His Father, *Dearest Father* (1954)

Lagerkvist, Par [Fabian] (1891—)

Born in a small town in southern Sweden, Lagerkvist was more bitterly disillusioned by World War I than were most people of neutral Sweden An extremely prolific writer, he is best known to the English speaking world for his fiction, but is also celebrated at home for his poetry and drama His works include *Angest* (*Anguish*), (1916), poems, *The Man without a Soul* (1936), drama, *Guest of Reality* (1925, trans, 1936), autobiography, *The Dwarf* (1944, trans, 1945) and *Barabbas* (1950, trans, 1951), novels In thought he has moved from a rather bitter outlook (he styled himself a religious atheist) through a persistent attack on the totalitarianism of the 1930s and 1940s to a belief in what has been called heroic humanitarian idealism In 1951 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature

Lawrence, D[avid] H[erbert] (1885–1930)

One of five children, Lawrence was born and raised near Nottingham, England, in circumstances not unlike those described in *Odour of Chrysanthemums* He shook off his Midlands environment by teaching for a short time and then by writing—not only novels and short stories, but also poetry, plays, essays, travel books, and criticism After marrying Frieda von Richthofen, Lawrence left England permanently and from 1919 on traveled widely The frankness concerning sex in his novels made them, especially after the reception of *The Rainbow* (1915), constantly subject to

being banned by the police, with the consequence that Lawrence was never secure financially. He died of tuberculosis, a disease which had threatened him nearly all his life. Among his best known works are *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *Women in Love* (1920), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), novels, *The Prussian Officer* (1914), stories, among them *Odour of Chrysanthemums*, *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), a travel book, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923).

Mann, Thomas (1875–1955)

Born in 1875 in Lubeck, Germany, Thomas Mann came from a family which had a long and distinguished history as one of the patrician groups dating back to the beginning of the North German Hanseatic League. He published a volume of short stories, *Little Herr Friedemann* (1898) and established himself as a major novelist with *Buddenbrooks* (1900). His chief work between the wars was *The Magic Mountain* (1924), which won him the Nobel Prize in 1929. The rise of Hitler caused Mann to seek refuge in Switzerland in 1933, and in 1936 he broke openly with the Nazi regime. In the same year he was deprived of his German citizenship. He came to the United States in 1938 and later became a citizen.

Mansfield, Katherine [née Kathleen Beauchamp] (1888–1923)

Miss Mansfield was born in Wellington, New Zealand, where she spent her childhood. From the age of fourteen to seventeen she was in London at Queen's College, where her interests were writing and music. Returning to New Zealand in 1906 she felt frustrated by her surroundings and was determined to get back to England. Thanks to an allowance from her father she did so in 1908. A year later she impulsively entered into a short-lived marriage with a musician. Shortly thereafter Katherine Mansfield began to publish in various little magazines, one of them edited by John Middleton Murry, whom she married in 1918. Suffering from tuberculosis contracted in 1917, she sought to restore her health in France and Switzerland. She died in Fontainebleau on January 9, 1923. The best of her stories were published in *Bliss*

(1920) and *A Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922) Her *Journal* (1927) and *Letters* (1929) have been edited by Murry

Melville, Herman (1819-1891)

Born in New York City, Melville shipped as a cabin boy for Liverpool in 1837 Four years later he sailed in a South Seas whaler which he jumped at the Marquesas This adventure was followed by a voyage to Tahiti and enlistment in the Navy From 1844 to 1850 Melville lived in New York, writing the four books which reflect his varied experiences *Typee*, *A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846), *Omoo*, *A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1847) *Redburn His First Voyage* (1849), *White-Jacket, or, The World in a Man of War* (1850) In 1850 Melville moved to the Berkshires, where he came in contact with Hawthorne and wrote *Moby Dick, or, The White Whale* (1851) and *Pierre, or The Ambiguities* (1852) From 1856, the date of *The Piazza Tales*, until his death Melville wrote only one work of fiction, *Billy Budd*, which was posthumously published

O'Connor, Frank [Michael O Donovan] (1903-)

Frank O Connor was born in Cork, Ireland, of parents of modest means and humble background During the strife with England he fought for Irish independence A librarian by profession, O Connor was for a time a director of the famous Abbey Theater, and he has written plays and dramatic criticism But it was his short stories which began appearing in the early thirties, that brought him fame on both sides of the Atlantic O Connor is a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker* His *Collected Stories* was published in 1952

Plomer, William (1903-)

Born in Africa, the son of a magistrate who was mainly concerned with native affairs, Plomer has lived in and written about Africa, Greece, Japan, and England He spent two years in Japan, always, he has said, in the closest touch with the Japanese themselves " At the age of twenty five, Plomer declined an offer of the chair in

English Literature at the Imperial University (Tokyo) Though mainly a short story writer, he also works in other genres and was for a time associated with Roy Campbell in the publication of a literary review, *Voorslag* His books include *Turbott Wolfe* (1926), novel, *Paper Houses* (1929) and *The Child of Queen Victoria* (1933), short stories, *The Fivefold Screen* (1932), poems, *Double Lives* (1943), an autobiography

Porter, Katherine Anne (1894-)

One of the most famous contemporary American short story writers, Miss Porter was born in Indian Creek, Texas She has traveled extensively, and has lived in foreign lands—particularly Mexico and Paris—for considerable periods She has received many honors and awards for her fiction, including Guggenheim Fellowships in 1931 and 1938 Though she has worked in Hollywood and has taught and lectured throughout the United States, her reputation rests on three volumes of collected stories and short novels, *Flowering Judas* (1935), *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), which includes the present story, and *The Leaning Tower* (1944)

Powers, J[ames] F[arl] (1917-)

An Illinoisan, Powers received his high school education from Franciscan friars, the branch of the Roman Catholic Church which he most admires His work was first published in *Accent* magazine and since then in many other periodicals His stories were collected in *Prince of Darkness and Other Stories* (1947), a volume which won him immediate critical recognition He has taught at Marquette University and has held a Guggenheim Fellowship (1948) He now lives in Minnesota and is engaged in writing his first novel, part of which has been published in *The New Yorker*

Stafford, Jean (1915-)

Miss Stafford, whose father was a writer of western stories, was born in Covina, California She was educated in the University of Colorado and later at Heidelberg, Germany Mrs Oliver Jen-

sen (her first husband was Robert Lowell, the poet) in private life she has taught at several colleges in the United States but now devotes her time to the writing of short stories and novels. Among her works are *Boston Adventure* (1944), *The Mountain Lion* (1947), and *The Catherine Wheel* (1952), all novels.

Stegner, Wallace (1909—)

Wallace Stegner was born on a farm in Iowa in 1909. Thanks to what he described as the pioneering itch in his father, he lived in various parts of the Great Plains region in the United States and Canada. Mr. Stegner was graduated from the University of Utah and received his doctor's degree from the University of Iowa. He has taught in several universities and now directs the Writing Center at Stanford. His best work deals with the West—for example, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943) and such nonfiction as *Mormon Country* (1942) and *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (1954).

Suckow, Ruth (1892—)

Daughter of a Congregational minister, Miss Suckow was educated at Grinnell College and the University of Denver. For a time she considered raising bees for a living, then turned to writing. Married in 1929, she has always been associated with Iowa, where she was born and now resides. Among her better known works are *Iowa Interiors* (1926), from which *A Start in Life* is taken, *The Folks* (1934), a novel, and *Some Others and Myself: Seven Stories and a Memoir* (1952).

Tolstoy, Count Leo (1828–1910)

A descendant of noble families well known in Russian history, Tolstoy left Kazan University for the army and fought in the Crimean War. His *Sevastopol* (1856) is one of the earliest first-hand accounts of warfare. After turbulent experiences in St. Petersburg and Moscow he married in 1861 and lived as a prosperous, apparently happy country gentleman and as the author of two of the greatest novels in world literature, *War and Peace* (1865–

1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877) About 1878 he underwent a change of heart and renounced contemporary society and art, including his own novels In 1910 he signed over his property to his wife and set out as a wandering religious pilgrim Within a few days of his departure he died at a railway station

Warren, Robert Penn (1905-)

Poet, short story writer, and novelist, Warren is also one of America's influential critics He was born in Kentucky and raised there and in Tennessee Educated at Vanderbilt and Oxford (as a Rhodes scholar), he has taught at several American universities and was coeditor of *The Southern Review* His books include *Understanding Poetry* (1938, rev ed, 1951) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943), written with Cleanth Brooks, *Night Rider* (1938) and *All the Kings Men* (1946), novels, *Selected Poems* (1943), and *The Circus in the Attic* (1947), from which collection *Blackberry Winter* is taken

Welty, Eudora (1909-)

Miss Welty was born in Jackson, Mississippi, and was educated at the Mississippi State College for Women and the University of Wisconsin Her work first appeared in *The Southern Review* She has written several books, including *A Curtain of Green* (1941), stories, *The Wide Net* (1943), stories, of which *A Still Moment* is one, *Delta Wedding* (1946), novel, *The Golden Apples* (1949), connected short stories, *The Ponder Heart* (1953), novel

Wharton, Edith (1862-1937)

Edith Wharton was born in New York of a socially distinguished family and was educated at private schools in the United States and abroad Her family did not approve of her writing and most of her better work was published after she was thirty five She married Edward Wharton in 1885 and after 1907 settled permanently in France (She divorced Wharton in 1913) Among her better known works are *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), novels, *Xingu and Other Stories* (1916)